

PALMS
of
ELIM

J. R. MACDOUGALL, D.D.

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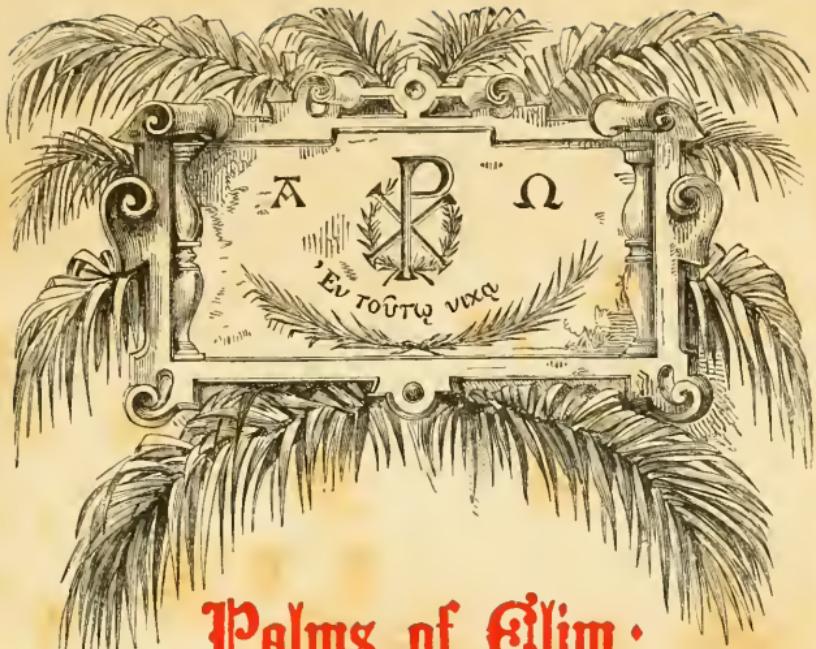


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Palms of Elim



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Or,

Rest and Refreshment in the Valleys.

By the Author of
“Morning and Night Watches,”
“Memories of Bethany,” “Eventide at Bethel,” &c.

“And they came to Elim (‘Valleys’), where were . . . threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there.”—EXOD. xv. 27.

London:
James Nisbet and Co., 21 Berners Street.
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John Ross Macduff

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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"BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN," &c.

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TO
AN AGED RELATIVE ;
WHO,
DURING THE LONG YEARS OF A LOVING AND DEVOTED LIFE,
HAS EXPERIENCED FOR HERSELF, AND REVEALED TO OTHERS,
THE 'REST AND REFRESHMENT' FOUND
UNDER
The Psalms of Elton;
THESE PAGES
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



Preface.

THIS Volume is intended as a companion to "THE GRAPES OF ESHCOL."

The latter contains a series of meditations on the glory and blessedness of a future Heaven—the rest which remaineth for the people of God,—‘Gleanings from the Land of Promise.’ The present, embraces the complementary theme indicated by the name on the title-page, the “rest” of *Grace* here, preparatory to the “rest” of *Glory* hereafter. As in the case, too, of the other, it is designed especially for the comfort and refreshment of those in the “Valleys” (as *Elim* means),—the varied valleys of earthly tribulation, God’s own children of sorrow; to be “a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain” (Isa. iv. 6).

There is a foretasted heaven on earth. “THE PALMS OF ELIM” afforded their grateful shade not in Canaan but in the wilderness. Even the gatherings from Eshcol were borne “on this side Jordan.” Bunyan’s hero was soothed and quickened as he listened, while yet at a distance, to the bells of the Celestial City. In a word, the “saint’s rest” is a present possession, as well as a glorious reversion:

"We which have believed DO enter into rest" (Heb. iv. 3). The believer does not require to soar upwards to the Golden Gates to have the prayer fulfilled—"Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." No: rather folding these wings underneath the shadowing Palms of the "desert land" (Deut. xxxii. 10), he can say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" *

It is with hallowed and stirring emotions the traveller in Palestine, when within sight of the earthly Jerusalem, finds himself under the shade of the venerable forms of Gethsemane's traditional Olives. But here is a nobler verity; the better privilege of every spiritual pilgrim who has the eye of faith on the Jerusalem above. Unlike these hoary relics of Divine agony and triumph by the side of the Kidron, we can point to Palms of gospel promise, which never lose their verdure, nurtured by the river of life flowing from the Paradise of God, "Whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed" (Ezek. xlviij. 12). The reputed Sibylline oracles of Greek and Roman fame were alleged to have been written on palm-leaves. Not only, however, were these full of mystery—purposely enigmatical;—but they were tossed capriciously

* "I have only lately learned that 'Tadmor' is the Hebrew for *Palm*; and that 'Tadmor in the wilderness' and *Palmyra*, not only designate the same place, but have the same meaning . . . Phoenix, too, is the Greek for *palm*; and the fable of the bird is supposed to originate in the tree which, if it is burned down, will send up a new stem" (*Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, p. 148). The phoenix is frequently seen in ancient Christian sculptures, resting on a branch of the Palm-tree,—as, e.g., in the quaint but interesting fresco in the Chapel of St. Felicita in Rome, near the Baths of Titus. In the background of the fresco, which represents her martyrdom and that of her seven sons, two palms are introduced, on each of which a phoenix is perched.

in an urn, and thence drawn at random. The Oracles of God, with their “good and comfortable words,” have no such dubious or arbitrary interpretation. They are written on the palm-leaves of ‘a more sure word of prophecy.’ “Thy Word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.”

Pilgrims of eternity! weary and travel-worn, may you find here and there in these pages, with their figurative Palms, restful, consolatory thoughts, under whose shadow you may repose;—a series of answers to the question asked while fainting under the burden and heat of the day, “Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to *rest* at noon!” (Song of Sol. i. 7). The God of the pillar-cloud, your Heavenly Father, thus speaks in our selected motto-verse, as He conducts you under these spreading branches—“*This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing:*” and “when He giveth quietness, (rest), who then can make trouble?” (Job xxxiv. 29). It is the Master’s special invitation to His best beloved followers still, as of old, “Come ye yourselves into a desert place and *rest* awhile” (Mark vi. 31).

Let us look, above all, to Him who is pre-eminently “*The Heavenly Palm;*” who came down to gladden with His presence the Elim encampments of His redeemed Israel, and who Himself utters the prophetical words—“The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is *weary*” (Isa. l. 4). He paid the price of His own life-blood to secure the precious gift of REST to the ‘weary and heavy-laden.’ One of the most beautiful and striking emblems of the early Christians, found on the sepulchral slabs in the Roman Catacombs and elsewhere (in addition to that already referred to), is the well-known monogram

(‘Chrism,’ see engraving on title-page), wreathed or intertwined with palm branches, denoting that the Palm, the emblem of triumph,* is *victory through the Divine Redeemer*. Equally notable, we may further add, is the introduction of the Palm in ancient monuments and frescoes in connection with the Apostle Paul. But he himself gives ‘the writing and interpretation’—“Thanks be to God, who giveth us the VICTORY *through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.*”†

The following description of the Palm, by the late Dean Alford, was recently perused by the writer under a grove of these on the heights of Bordighera, “the Jericho of North Italy.” The accomplished Christian scholar was only conveying to others, in his own fervent way, the impression made upon him in visiting one of earth’s Edens. But perhaps, too, he may have had in his mind’s eye a loftier spiritual meaning, when he thus speaks of the Palm as “the Child of the Sun.” It was read, at all events, in a bright day in autumn, with the higher reference vividly impressed on me.

“There is no end to the picturesque groupings of these lovely trees, and their graceful effects in the sunlight. In the sunlight!—for of all trees the Palm is the child of the sun, and the best purveyor of

* “*Palma victoriæ signum est illius belli, quod, inter se, carno et spiritus gerunt.*”

† It is hardly necessary to remind the reader what a conspicuous place the palm occupied in the carving and in the Holy Place of the Temple of old. “And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers, within and without. The two doors also were of olive-tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm-trees. And he carved thereon cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers; and covered them with gold fitted upon the carved work” (1 Kings vi. 29, 32, 35).

flecked and dancing shade. Under the palm thickets, every darkest spot of shadow is a grand medley of exquisitely traced lines, and on the verge of the bare sunlight outside, leap and twinkle a thousand sharply-marked parallel bars of graceful leasage . . . Nor is the least grace of the palm the silvery whisper of reeded fronds which dwells everywhere about and under it. With the palm, romance reaches its highest. That soft sound soothed the old world griefs of patriarchs, and murmured over the bivouacs of Eastern armies. When the longers for Zion sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon, was it not the rough burr of the palm on which they hung their harps, rather than the commonly but gratuitously imagined branch of the willow? And when Judea was again captive, it was under the palm that the Conqueror placed the daughter of Ziou."

To the words of this keen observer of Nature's latent charms, and interpreter of their spiritual lessons, we may add the well-known tradition in the Eastern Church, that when the long tapering palm-leaves quiver in the breeze, they *whisper the name of JESUS*. May the beautiful myth be turned by us into a joyful reality. Looking up to Him who has given His own recorded promise, "My people shall dwell in quiet resting-places" (Isa. xxxii. 18), may we be able in lowly trust and the calm confidence of faith, to tell as our experience, "*I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste*" (Song of Sol. ii. 3).

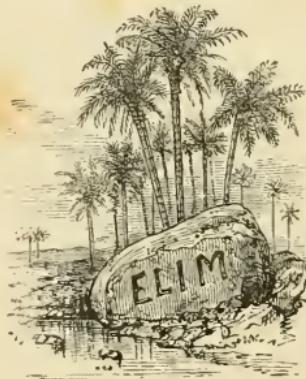
" From darkness, here, and dreariness,
We ask not full repose,
Only be THOU at hand to bless
Our trial hour of woes.
Is not the Pilgrim's toil o'erpaid
By the clear rill and *palmy* shade?
And see we not, up Earth's dark glade,
The Gate of Heaven unclose?"

—*Christian Year.*

It is only right to add, that the following pages are, so far at least, the response to a request made to the author,

to select a number of the more comforting passages from his former and less-known writings. This request he would have declined even partially to entertain, had the help thus suggested not enabled him the better to fulfil the purpose he has long had, of preparing, under the above title (and adhering to the specified “threescore and ten” of the sacred text (Ex. xv. 27), a companion volume to that already alluded to. By combining this aid with fresh matter, and keeping in view the class of readers for whom these meditations are designed, he has been enabled, he trusts, thus to impart greater variety to the treatment of the theme.

“ God grant me, so with loving hand to bring
 Refreshment to His weary ones,—to meet
Their thirst with water from the Living-Spring ;
 And, bearing thus, to pour it at His feet ! ”





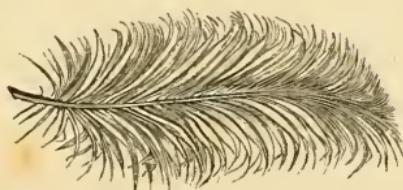
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I.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

“Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.”

—Ps. xc. 1.

Divine Immutability. A GLORIOUS palm-shade with its evergreen fronds: a noble key-note to a noble song, the oldest in the Psalter, whose authorship invests it with an interest all its own, for it bears as its inscription, “A prayer of Moses the Man of God.” The entire psalm was evidently written by the great leader and lawgiver, not certainly when the Israelites were encamped in safety and peace at Elim, under nature’s verdant awning, with the twelve fountains at their side (a desert oasis). Rather does it breathe the plaintive tones of a dirge or elegy, composed after some appalling judgment toward the close of the wanderings—“days and years wherein they had seen evil” (ver. 15), when death had caused sudden havoc through the tents; compared to the rush of a resistless torrent (ver. 5), or the blighting and withering of the grass at sundown prostrate under the mower’s scythe (Num. xiv. 5, 6). In the lesson thus read on human frailty and mortality, seeing perhaps, both prospectively and retrospectively, the wilderness strewn with the blanched bones of the Pilgrim host,

the writer turns from the mutable to the Immutable, from the finite to the Infinite, from the desert's shifting sands to the stable Everlasting Rock—from *man* to *God*—“Lord, THOU hast been our dwelling-place in all generations !”

Beautiful and significant is the figure employed: all the more impressive, by reason of very contrast, must it have been to the Hebrews, first after their long enslaved, and now entering their nomad, life. The permanent dwelling was to them not even a memory. If entertained at all, it could only be the dream and aspiration of some ideal future. It was the psalm of a homeless, expatriated race, who “wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, and found no city to dwell in.”

Most of us know what home is. There is music in the name which no words can describe. It is not locality or scenery which makes home. A prison is not a home; a castle or palace with gilded ceilings, if there be no living, loving voices, is not home. Home is wherever the affections gather round treasured objects. It is the centre of love; the spot where the spirit, worn and jaded with life’s bustle, harassed with its anxieties and disappointments, delights to fold its weary wing; that blessed refuge where cherished tones chase sorrow from the heart, and tender hands smooth the wrinkles which care has been ploughing on the cheek.

The believer has his Home too, the majestic sanctuary of Infinite love. And there is no true dwelling-place or resting-place for the immortal soul but this. Yes! surrounded though we be with lavish profusion of material comforts and blessings, still there is in every heart a restless, unsatisfied craving after a higher good. No finite portion can adequately meet these infinite longings. The homeless child strayed from his father’s house—weeping

for its lost residence—is a picture of the soul astray from its home and happiness in the all-glorious God.

But once we can take up the sublime utterance of the leader of the Hebrews, “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place,” then what a home is ours, with its perfect repose and everlasting inviolable security! Not the desert tent, not the temporary shade and shelter and refreshment of the Elim palm-grove and its fountains, but the chiefest Divine reality which these earthly images adumbrated. In that enduring mansion all fears are lulled to rest, all misgivings dispelled. It is a garrisoned home with many chambers in it; each chamber an attribute of the Eternal. For “the *name* of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. xviii. 10). And though thousand thousand have rushed, in by-past ages, to these august chambers, still there is room. Age cannot impair their safety, time cannot crumble down their walls. It is delightful to think of the many, since the hour when Moses penned it, who have already sung this glorious anthem. The captive in his dungeon, the martyr at the stake, the orphan in his loneliness, the widow in her agony, the sick one on his couch, the dying one in his last moments. Yes, and those, too, out amid the battle of life, the daily fever and turmoil of existence, the fret and friction of busy tempted hours:—such heroes of God, as they breast “the loud stunning tide,” include it among the cherished “melodies of the everlasting chime!”

As in the case of Pilgrim Israel, we have ever and anon imparted to us, in touching impressiveness, the same world-wide lesson—that we can make no home or refuge of any creature or created good. “They shall perish” is written on the best of earthly palm-trees. It is engraved on many a tombstone—carved on the shattered

lintels of many a broken heart. Home—the home and roof-tree of earth!—with not a few it is a ruin, the wreck and debris of a hallowed past, the grave of fond hopes and departed joys and blighted affections. Some who trace these lines may be able thus to sing this oldest strain of the Psalter only through their tears. God may have been proclaiming to you, through severe and varied discipline, that earth is not your home, that you are but sojourners here, that your dwellings are not freehold but leasehold. He would lead you not to mistake the hospice of the wayfarer for the permanent abiding Mansion; the perishable refuge for the magnificent clefts of the Rock of Ages. He would lead you, as “strangers on earth,” to have your “citizenship in heaven.” These trials may be only the tones of His own tender voice, issuing the invitation, “Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (*Isaiah xxvi. 20*). He may be putting a thorn in your earthly nest and earthly home, to drive you to the wing and teach you to warble as you soar up to heaven’s gate—“Lord, amid the frailty and failing of all created things, I turn to the One only unfailing, unvarying, unchanging portion! My dwelling-place shall henceforth be in Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever!”

In such a Home, when fully realised and tested as no phantasm and shadow but a sublime verity, who cannot enjoy, even with regard to earthly things, the feeling of satisfaction and of safety? “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (lit. ‘peace, peace’) whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” The child dreads no danger so long as the strong encompassing arm of his father is around

him. The winter storm may revel at will outside, but in the paternal dwelling he is safe. There is a special promise given to all who thus confidently resort to the Everlasting God as their home and portion. “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation ; there shall no evil (no real evil) befall thee” (Ps. xci. 9, 10). In the most untoward circumstances He will prove to His people their protector ; so that, in the words put into the lips of Ezekiel, “They shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” (Ezek. xxxiv. 25), in the unlikeliest places and seasons they may feel sweetly secure. It is in Himself that His own promise has its most glorious fulfilment—“Thy people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places” (Isa. xxxii. 18).

Nor can we omit a closing reference to the last clause of our motto verse—“in all generations.” A noble thought—Jehovah the unchanging dwelling-place of His Church and His people in every age ! Even Moses, who had not the long centuries of holy tradition and divine and saintly memory we enjoy, loved to repose on the thought of God, not only as “the God of his fathers,” but as the God of all the years, as well as of all the families of earth. Perhaps he penned the psalm some night in the desert—night with its darkness, as if the shadow of the Almighty’s wings. He may have delighted to think that the same silent stars which kept vigil over the tents of Mamre, Shechem, and Bethel in the generations of old, were stooping that hour over the sleeping earth. But more comforting still the reflection, that He who lighted up these altar-fires in the great nightly temple, was ever living and loving ; the unchanging sanctuary of His people from age to age. The generations had passed away and perished : He was still,

and ever would be, the same. Let ours be the prayer, "Be Thou my strong habitation to which I may continually resort!"

And, as in the picture of a blessed earthly home, there must be harmony of will and congeniality of taste and feeling among the occupants, let it be our constant and lofty aspiration that our human wills may gradually be made coincident with the Divine, our hearts filled with love to Him, and love for all on whom His own boundless love is lavished. Having this as the master passion—the dominant principle in our regenerated nature, the motive principle of our spiritual life, we shall know that as children we are within the dwelling-place of our Father, "For he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

"Let the beauty of the Lord," is the closing prayer of the psalm, "be upon us :" or as that is rendered in the Targum, "Let the sweetness of the garden of Eden be upon us ;" that beauty and sweetness which is better than shade of palm, or breath of flower, or music of fountain—the habitual realisation of God's gracious favour and paternal guardianship, "They shall rest in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17).

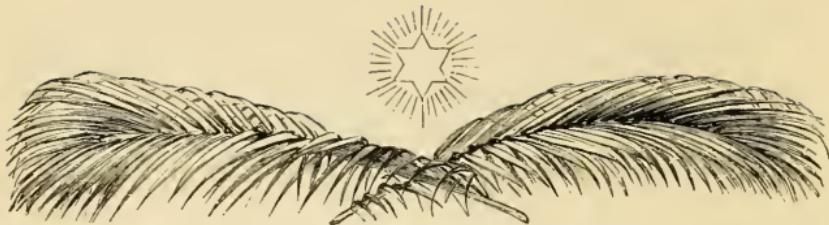
" Plan not, nor scheme,—but calmly wait,
His choice is best.
While blind and erring is thy sight ;
His wisdom sees and judges right,
So trust and rest.

" Strive not, nor struggle ; thy poor might
Can never wrest
The meanest thing to serve thy will.
All power is His alone : Be still,
And trust and rest.

“ What dost thou fear ? His wisdom reigns
Supreme confessed ;
His power is infinite ; His love
Thy deepest, fondest dreams above,
So trust and rest.”

“ HE THAT DWELLETH IN THE SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH
SHALL ABIDE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.”





II.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose."

—ROM. viii. 28.

All for **THIS** verse rises like a tapering palm in the midst of its group. The precious chapter from which Good. it is taken may itself be likened to a grove of these—each separate frond whispering of refreshment and rest in Jesus!

It has been thought by some, that this section of the Apostle's inspired letter was specially designed for the encouragement and consolation of the Christians who were then suffering under the inhuman persecution of the Emperor Nero. We can imagine, when these martyr-spirits were about to be cast to the lions, or when, covered with tar and pitch, they were led forth to the gardens of the Quirinal to have the torch applied to them in order to illuminate the city, how the solacing words of the Divine 'keepsake' would sustain their tortured frames,—“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed” (ver. 18). Nor would any word in all the Epistle be more comforting than our motto verse,—“We know that all things work

together for good to them that love God." It is placed, so to speak, in the centre of the palm-grove—in the centre of this wonderful galaxy of Divine truth and consolation. It cheered the old Roman Christians under a great fight of afflictions. It has proved a balm-word of comfort to millions of wounded spirits ever since.

The Apostle here makes the glorious assertion, that whatever befalls God's children, their joys, sorrows, comforts, crosses, losses, all are a part of a Divine plan and arrangement, whose issue and result is their good.

There is nothing so incredible to unbelief as this. That bitter pang which tore up my hopes by the root ! that unexpected heritage of penury ! that anguished sickbed ! that crushing bereavement ! how can I write '*good*' upon these? How can this broken heart ever endorse such a statement as that of the sacred writer ?

Yes! but faith *should* do so; faith *CAN* do so. Paul would have uttered what no Roman Christian, or any other Christian, would have credited, had he said '*we see.*' But observe, his language is the utterance of believing trust—"the confidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). He says, "*we know.*" Behind that dark cloud he speaks with assured conviction of a shining face. At that loom which the world calls 'fate,' with these tangled, confused, mazy threads, he could tell of a Divine Artificer who holds the shuttle in His hand, and who understands (what the spectator often does not understand) that all is for *good*. He was himself a living testimony to the truth of his assertion. His bonds and imprisonment; how seemingly untoward! What a blow to the Church! How fatal to the progress of the truth! Can Paul's Lord be really supervising and controlling all? So may have reasoned some unfaithful hearts at the very time when in his dungeon he was writing

this clause in one of his letters : “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, that the things which have happened to me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel” (Phil. i. 12).

Are there not many who can tell the same? I believe few can fail to look back on some dark passages in their history—dark at the time—full of mystery—that led even to gloomy and unworthy thoughts regarding God; but who can see them now to be luminous with mercy: some wise reason for mysterious dealings come to light, which at the moment was undiscernible. And if such be, with any, a present experience—the cloud, without apparently even the ‘silver lining’—be it theirs to *trust*. ‘The good’ will yet be unfolded. Yes! take that short comforting parenthesis, and let it fling its ray of comfort athwart the gloom—“Though now for a season (*IF NEED BE*) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” The bow will yet appear in the cloud. God will be His own Interpreter.

Again. How wide is this assertion of the Apostle! He does not say, ‘We know that *some* things,’ or ‘*most* things,’ or ‘*joyous* things.’ But “*all* things.” From the minutest to the most momentous; from the humblest event in daily providence to the great crisis-hours in grace.

And all things “*work*”—they *are* working; not all things *have* worked, or *shall* work, but it is a present operation. At this very moment, when some voice may be saying, “Thy judgments are a great deep;” the angels above, who are watching the development of the great plan, are with folded wings exclaiming, “The Lord is righteous in *all* His ways, and holy in *all* His works” (Ps. cxlv. 17).

And then all things “**WORK TOGETHER**.” It is a beautiful blending. Many different colours, in themselves raw and unsightly, are required in order to weave the har-

monious pattern. Many separate tones and notes of music, even discords and dissonances, are required to make up the harmonious anthem. Many separate wheels and joints are required to make the piece of machinery. Take a thread separately, or a note separately, or a wheel or a tooth of a wheel separately, and there may be neither use nor beauty discernible. But *complete* the web, *combine* the notes, *put together* the separate parts of steel and iron, and you see how perfect and symmetrical is the result.

Here is the lesson for faith: "What I do," says God, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." We must, meanwhile, take the bitter with the sweet. The Great Physician knows that all the ingredients in His dealings are for our good. He compounds them. The cup He gives us to drink; and "shall we not drink it?" God is said to make His chariot—What? Is it the sunshine? Is it the clusters of gleaming stars or radiant planets? Nay, it is the CLOUDS. But that cloudy chariot has an axle of love. And though clouds and darkness are round about His throne, mercy and truth go continually before His face. Beautifully says our countryman, the distinguished missionary and traveller, Livingstone: "We who see such small segments of the mighty cycles of God's providence, often imagine some to be failures, which He does not. . . . If we could see a larger arc of the great providential cycle, we might sometimes rejoice when we weep. But God giveth not account of any of His matters. We must just trust to His wisdom." Let us be assured of this, He has our best interests at heart. He has what is here called our 'GOOD' in view. It may not be, it will not be, the world's definition of good—riches, honours, glory, worldly prosperity. But it will be better. It is our soul's good, ripening the immortal part of us for glory. He may cause His

north wind and His south wind to blow: we may see nothing but the hurricane bending the palm branches and ruffling the tender flowers; but what is the result? "The spices flow out," the fragrance of the Christian graces are wafted around, and the Beloved comes into His garden. "Glory to God for all!" were Chrysostom's last words.

" What seems so dark to thy dim sight
 May be a shadow, seen aright,
 Making some brightness doubly bright.

" The flash that struck thy tree—no more
 To shelter thee—lets heaven's blue floor
 Shine where it never shone before.

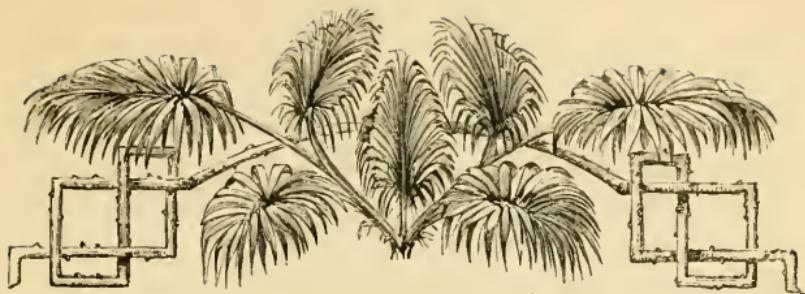
" The cry wrung from thy spirit's pain
 May echo on some far-off plain,
 And guide a wanderer home again."

Oh, if not now, at least in the light of eternity, looking down from the everlasting hills on the long vista of the earthly valley, we shall be able joyfully to attest, "He hath done all things well." "Men see not yet the bright light in the clouds," "But it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light!" We may have to wait until we obtain entrance within the Gates; but then, at least, the legend will be subscribed,—rather will the lips be attuned for the everlasting song,—"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us!"

" Still we study, always failing!
 God can read it, we must wait;
 Wait, until He teach the mystery,
 Then the wisdom-woven history
 Faith shall read and love translate.

" Leaflets now unpaged and scattered
 Time's great library receives;
 When eternity shall bind them,
 Golden volumes we shall find them,
 God's light falling on the leaves."

"O REST IN THE LORD, AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM."



III.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

*“For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able
to succour them that are tempted.”*

—HEB. ii. 18.

The Sympathy of Jesus. THERE can be no more gracious whisper from the leaves of the Heavenly Palm than this.

What an infinitude of comfort to every sorrowing one, the simple declaration, “In that He Himself hath *suffered* being *tempted!*” Jesus the Incarnate God, “the Living Kinsman” (Job xix. 25), had a mysterious identity of experience with His suffering, and with His tempted people; so that nothing can happen to the members but what has happened to the Head. They can feel that no sorrow shades their souls but the same darkened His. “As He is,” so are they “in this world” (1 John iv. 17). He Himself—the thorn-crowned King—knows every thorn which pierces them, every pang of spirit and pang of body. The loss of beloved friends, the treachery of false ones, temptation to distrust God’s providence, to pervert and misapply His Word, to question the rectitude and reason of His dealings, the forecastings of a dark and troubled future; ay, the saddest and most intolerable woe that can

crush and overbear the soul—the sense of Divine desertion—the withdrawal of the countenance of His Heavenly Father. Oh, the unutterable solace in the darkest hour of earthly suffering, to look up to the Brother in our nature,—the “prevailing Prince” who has “power with God,” and to say, “He hath suffered *being tempted!*”

When we first contemplate this amazing theme, the identity of experience seems to be partial and incomplete. Jesus, we are led to say, was never ‘tempted’ as we have been. Temptations might assail, but they never could overcome His sinless, spotless, uncontaminated humanity. He never could know, therefore, the sorest part of these our struggles, when through its own weakness the soul has at last to succumb to the hurricane, and is haunted with the terrors of remorse !

Yes ! but let us remember it was the very fact of the Infinite purity of the tempted ONE which imparted, in His case, the saddest element to temptation. How inconceivable the recoil of the refined and exquisite sensibilities of His holy nature from the presence of sin. And, with these unchanged human sensibilities in His glorified state, how deeply must He commiserate still the case of His assaulted people ! How tenderly must He feel for every wound of His soldiers, seeing that He, the Captain of their salvation, was Himself “made perfect through sufferings.”

Afflicted believer ! rejoice that sorrow and suffering have (if the expression dare be used) assimilated Christ with you, and you with Christ, in this your trial-hour. With what a divine significance, augmented and intensified by subsequent experience, can He say, “I know your sorrows.” If you are bleeding under some peculiarly heavy infliction of the rod, ready to say in the bitterness of your grief, “No one knows, no one can gauge the depth of my anguish,”

He can—He does. “He knoweth our frame, He remembeth that we are dust.” With reverence we say it,—God—the Omnipotent, Omniscient God—cannot, with all the infinitude of His nature, *sympathise*. He can compassionate; but He cannot sympathise in the way of *feeling* with us. Sympathy requires, as its two conditions, identity of nature and identity of experience. “We have *such* an High Priest;” One who is said to be (not touched with our infirmities), but “touched with the *feeling* of our infirmities.”

Our beautiful motto-verse gives more comfort still. The words affirm not merely that Christ has identity of experience—a passive sympathy with His tried people—He is also the *succourer* of the tempted, “He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

If He be summoning any of us to difficult and perplexing duty, or exacting from us some heavy sacrifice, or even apparently placing us in the way of peril and temptation, He will not suffer the burden to crush, or the temptation to overcome, or the fiery trial to consume. He will keep us in the crucible as long, but no longer than He sees to be absolutely needful to test our faith and purify our graces. All that concerns us and ours is in His hands.

Oh, as we see the Angels of Tribulation with their sevenfold vials issuing forth from the gate of heaven (Rev. xv. 1),—how blessed to know that they are marshalled, commissioned by the great Lord of Angels, the once suffering but now exalted Redeemer! In Zechariah’s vision (i. 8) of “the man on the red horse”—*behind* HIM were angels and providences—the “black and speckled and white horses.” But *He* is *between* them, ordering, regulating, appointing, all that befals His people, trusting their persons and fortunes not even to an angel’s care, without His own guidance, sanction, and direction.

And when the last hour arrives (which, however varied be our other experiences, we must all encounter), is it not here that His sympathy—the sympathy of fellow-feeling—is most of all valued? He can endorse even this closing experience with the words, “I know it.” To the living Christian in his season of affliction, He can say, “I am He that *liveth*.” But to the dying Christian He can add, “I am He that *was dead*.” ‘I know well, through the memories of My cross and passion, the conflict of that final struggle-hour! I know, what it is, O Believer, to *die!* And because I know this, I can make Palms of comfort to spring up and overshadow you on the brink of Jordan as well as in the wilderness! Fear not to pass what *I* have passed! Feel amid these buffeting billows that they have swept over *Me*. And with the thought of Me as your Precursor, and of My deathless exalted sympathy, sing, as you plunge into the stream, “Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth passeth over before me into Jordan!” (Joshua iii. 11).

“As oft, with worn and weary feet,
We tread earth’s rugged valley o’er,
The thought, how comforting and sweet!
Christ walked this toilsome path before !
Our wants and weaknesses He knows,
From life’s first dawning to its close.

“Just such as I, this earth He trod,
With every human ill but sin ;
And though indeed the very God,
As I am now, so He has been.
My God, my Saviour, look on me
With pity, love, and sympathy !”

“ LEARN OF ME, FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART : AND YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS.”



IV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind."

—ISA. xxvii. 8.

The wind tempered. THIS is a sheltering verse to those who, in a figurative sense, are exposed to the swoop of the desert simoom. Under one of God's own Palms we can sit and calmly meditate on the blessed promise, here given under expressive imagery, that He will never allow our trials or His chastisements to go *too far*.

"Man is born to trouble." Sorrow is the common heritage of a suffering world. And not only are the "rough wind" and the "east wind" ever and anon careering by, but He does not conceal that it is *He* who sends them. It is specially spoken of and designated here as "*His* rough wind." In the blighting of Jonah's gourd, we are told "The LORD prepared a vehement east wind;" and in the bold and sublime language of the Psalmist, He is similarly represented as "walking on the wings of the wind." So too in moral hurricanes. "Who knoweth not in all these things that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?"

But (and this is the more special truth which claims our attention), if that east wind blows, He will not suffer it to sweep

too vehemently ; and *when* it receives its mission from Him, He will not allow “the rough wind” to be let loose at the same time from its chambers. He will moderate adversity. “He knoweth our frame.” According to the common proverb, “He will temper the wind to the shorn lamb.” He did not make Israel feel at once and at the same time want of bread and want of water. The manna had been provided when they were suffering from the deprivation of the other priceless boon. Look at the first clause of the somewhat enigmatical words which form our motto-verse—“In measure thou wilt debate with it.” “In measure!” Or, as in another place, “I will correct thee *in measure*” (Jer. xxx. 11). God has no capricious dealings. All will be scrupulously weighed out in the balances of His wisdom and faithfulness. He CONSIDERS the soul in adversity (Ps. xxxi. 7). “When He winnows,” as Matthew Henry says, “He sends a gentle gale to blow away the chaff, not to blow away the corn.” He will cause to sing of mercy in the midst of judgment, and fulfil His own promise, “As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.”

Who has not sat under this gracious Elim palm and experienced the truth of the assertion? Is it the hour of bereavement?—the time when, above all others, the east wind may be said to blow, nipping early spring-buds, or blighting tender blossoms, or strewing autumn leaves. Who has not then to tell of amazing support?—some sweet solaces which have tended to moderate the sweep of the hurricane, break the cruel blow, and disarm trial of much of its severity. Glimpses appear in the midst of the darkness—blue vistas are seen opening in the storm-wreathed sky!

Is it the hour of sickness and protracted suffering? There truly is the east wind—wearing torture, days of pain, nights of

weariness, every nerve a chord of anguish. But here, too, it might have been worse. That sufferer (to take one out of many suppositions,) might have been on a foreign shore--away from friends and home and kindly sympathies, dying in unutterable loneliness, with no gentle hand to smooth his pillow. But when, in the midst of cruel bodily pangs, he looks around on faces beaming with kindness—each member of the loving circle animated with one thought and desire—to alleviate pain by offices of tender affection—you can almost picture that wan and wasted prisoner clasping his hands and muttering in silent gratitude, ‘My case might have been far sadder. Thanks be to that gracious and considerate God who “stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind !”’

We believe all can own and trace these tender mitigations,—the prevention of the two winds from blowing simultaneously—God suffering not the bruised reed to be broken, just *because* it was bruised—laying on with one hand, comforting and binding up with the other,—sending whatever wind is needed to bring to the desired haven, not one blast permitted but what is required. “He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. x. 13). “Blessed be God,” says Chrysostom, “who permitted the tempest; and blessed be God, who has dispersed it and made it a calm.” It was not from the lips of one of His own true people, but from a self-outcast and self-exile, that the utterance proceeded, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” His loved and trusting children recognise in Him the Refiner of silver, who sits by the furnace regulating and tempering the fury of the flames. His fires are for purification, not for destruction.

And at *death*—seated for the last time under the Elim palms, when the tent is about to be struck for prosecuting a more mysterious journey—*death*, the hour that thousands on thousands have shrunk from and dreaded—ay, the hour which none can contemplate without profound emotion ; yet *when* it does come—when the house of the earthly tabernacle rocks and trembles under the blasts of that inexorable ‘east wind,’ the ‘rough wind’ is stayed. The believer feels the rush of the final hurricane, but he rises above it with the glorious compensating supports and comforts then vouchsafed. If his eye is dimming to human smiles, there is a Mightier *Presence* at his side, which the gathering darkness only renders more visible. When those around him can think, perhaps, only of the terribleness of grappling with the tempest which in a few moments is to reduce all to a heap of ruins ; with his last breath he rises above the storm, saying in trembling accents—‘ Hush your fears ! I am walking through the dark valley, but HE is giving me dying grace for a dying hour.’ “ He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind ! ”

We may appropriately conclude with the words of a sacred singer in the “ Land of Luther ” :—

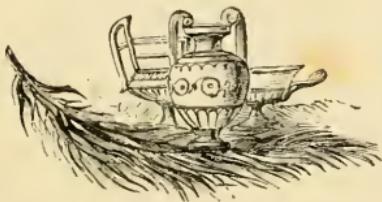
“ Though the clouds are seen ascending,
Soon the heavens are overcast,
And the weary heart is bending
'Neath affliction's stormy blast.

“ Yet the Lord, on high presiding,
Rules the storm with powerful hand ;
He the shower of grace is guiding
To the dry and barren land.

“ See, at length the clouds are breaking—
Tempests have not passed in vain ;
For the soul, revived, awaking,
Bears its fruits and flowers again.

“ Love divine has seen and counted
 Every tear it caused to fall;
And the storm which love appointed
 Was its choicest gift of all.”

“ FOR THOU HAST BEEN A STRENGTH TO THE POOR, A STRENGTH TO
THE NEEDY IN HIS DISTRESS, A REFUGE FROM THE STORM, A
SHADOW FROM THE HEAT, WHEN THE BLAST OF THE TERRIBLE
ONES IS AS A STORM AGAINST THE WALL.”





V.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the
Father, full of grace and truth."*

—JOHN i. 14.

The Fatherhood of God.

IF the fronds of the palm, by a beautiful Eastern Christian myth to which we have already referred, were said to whisper the name of Jesus, it may surely be averred of the true Heavenly Palm, that the leaves were heard continually to whisper a name, well-nigh, if not altogether, new to God's spiritual Israel—that of FATHER.

And yet, may it not be truthfully asserted regarding not a few who live under the better dispensation, that there are often distorted views entertained of the nature of God, little in harmony with this Divine Fatherhood? Are there not many who think of Him only as a mighty Architect who has piled infinite space with His handiwork;—omnipotent, omniscient;—awful in His holiness, inexorable in His justice, implacable in His vengeance. They have fully apprehended the partial revelation of Him as the punisher of sin, but they have failed to gaze on the glorious complement of His character, as the Gracious and Merciful, the Father and the Friend.

This new *paternal* relation of Jehovah to His people is manifested in the Person of Him who came to our world the Incarnation of the Divine Spirituality—the unveiler of the essential perfections of Deity. “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” He is Himself the articulate answer to the query of His impatient disciple, “Lord, show us *the Father*, and it sufficeth us.” “He that hath seen *Me*,” was the reply, “hath seen the Father.” As there had been a patriarchal, a legal, an angelic, a prophetic dispensation,—so now Christ came as the founder and exponent of a *filial* one. To take the significant opening words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews (not as they are rendered in our version, but as they have been rendered in the full force of the original), “God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us *by a Son*.”

Most delightful surely and comforting is this theme of contemplation—Christ the Revealer of the Father! “The Word,” says the beloved Apostle, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (and then follows our motto-verse), “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Well may He be designated by this appropriate term. For just as ‘words’ are the outward audible expression of silent invisible thought, so Christ is the expression of the Invisible God, the utterance and embodiment, in human shape, of Him who revealed Himself in the dimness of an earlier dispensation as “Secret,” “Wonderful,” “Incomprehensible.” “From henceforth,” says Christ, pointing to Himself, “ye know the Father, and have seen Him” (John xiv. 7). How He dwells upon the very name! How He delights to interweave it with parable and miracle, and intercessory

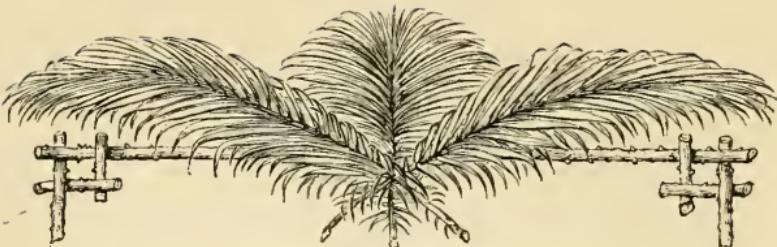
prayer, and last agony, and first Resurrection-words ! Well He knew the tender associations the image would call forth among the millions who pondered the story of His incarnation. He would have the sacred earthly relation transfused into the Heavenly. As He puts His people in the clefts of the Rock, and makes all the glory of His goodness to pass by, the proclamation is made, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God !" The opening invocation of His own Universal Prayer is "Our Father." He would have them to know and to feel, even in the house of their earthly tabernacle, that they are pacing a Father's halls ;—a dwelling frescoed and decorated with a Father's love ! In seeing Him they see the Father (John xiv. 7). In asking Him for some needed boon, they ask the Father. The names are interchangeable. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." Oh, how near does all this bring the great God Almighty ! How it represents Him, as regarding with discriminating love each member of His redeemed family ; caring for their wants, sympathising with their sorrows, bearing with their infirmities ; loving them—we had almost said doating on them *as a Father*. How different from the heathen conception of their deities, living in the isolation of a voluptuous calm ; far removed from the concerns of earth, devoid of all personal interest in those from whom, nevertheless, they demanded cruel offerings, and over whom they were often represented as revelling in sanguinary malignity. "God in Christ," "God with us":—"with us," as truly as Jesus was with the anxious Nicodemus, or with the sisters of Bethany, or with the widow at Nain, or with the disciples tossed on their midnight sea, or with the downcast wayfarers on the road to Emmaus. "God with us"—brought down from the regions of infinite abstraction ; challenging

our perfect confidence and trustful love. Even in our Gethsemanes of deepest sorrow, we can take the cup as He did in His midnight watch, and say, "O my *Father*! If it be possible!"

Realising this glorious truth, we can breathe the time-worn litany, with the consciousness of a new meaning and trust,—“O God, the *Father* of heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!” O my gracious Father! I will measure Thee no longer by any low human standard. Let the gentleness and benignity of Him who walked this earth as Thine Image, teach me evermore to repose unhesitatingly in the everlasting kindness of Thine Infinite heart. Under this glorious shelter,—the shade of this Palm of Elim, “I will lay me down in peace and sleep;” for God is *my Father*; and GOD IS LOVE! Yes, and even though that love should at times be veiled, and the leaves of the earthly palm tree be saturated with “the dews of the night,” I shall strive to remember the new sacred Covenant relation, and with a child’s unwavering trust breathe the words the Divine Revealer Himself has taught me—“Even so, FATHER! for so, it seemed good in Thy sight!”

“ O Father! not my will, but Thine be done,
So spake the Son.
Be this our charm, mellowing earth’s ruder noise
Of griefs and joys;
That we may cling for ever to Thy breast
In perfect rest.”

“I SAT DOWN UNDER HIS SHADOW WITH GREAT DELIGHT.”



VI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

*“Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that
we ask or think.”*

—EPH. iii. 20.

Transcendently COULD the Israelites at Elim fail to recall Able. their immediately preceding wilderness experience? It was the depressing and discouraging one at Marah, where their longings and hopes were mocked with the bitter pool. But the God of the cloudy pillar made it the occasion of manifesting His wondrous power and boundless resources, showing that “with Him all things are possible.” A tree cast into the acrid waters transmuted them into sweetness.

In all the difficulties, perplexities, and emergencies of the spiritual life, we may well rest with the consolatory interrogation, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”—rejoicing in Him, who, as the true Healing Tree, changes—often reverses—the bitterest experiences. His hand is “never shortened that it cannot save.”

Wondrous and beautiful is the expression of the Great Apostle which heads this meditation,—that verse with its grand redundancy of words—its significant and touching tautology. See how the gradation rises. See how he

mounts, as by a golden ladder, to his magnificent climax ! Christ is “able to do,” Christ is “able to do abundantly,” Christ is “able to do abundantly, above all that we ask or think.” And then, as if he had not unburdened his soul of the full truth, the “goodly matter” his heart was inditing, he adds another stone to the pyramid—“*Exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.*”

Let us rejoice in such a complete Saviour as this, sufficient for all temporal and all spiritual necessities : who can bind up the broken body ; who can bind up the broken soul ; ease the aching head, and quiet the aching spirit ; who can reclaim the wandering and save the lost. What earthly friend can help us so? Who else, save He, can fill with His presence and love the gap in the sorrow-stricken heart? But He can ; He *does!* Lover and friend may be put far from us ; what we once most cherished and doated on may be smitten with inevitable change ; the roof where childhood revelled may be a heap of ruins, or habited by strangers ; the parents’ arms that clasped us as we lisped our infant prayer, or which smoothed our pillows in sickness, may be mouldering in the dust ; voices that cheered us on the pilgrimage may be hushed in awful silence. But *here* is One who is Father, Brother, Physician, Friend, Home, ALL! His power intervenes and upholds where other resources fail or reveal their inadequacy. No storm can overturn that Home of unblighted love! No envious whisper can estrange that true Friend! No King of terrors can paralyse the Everlasting arms! “The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” Oh! blessed it is for the broken and downcast in the hour of crushing disappointment, or baffled purpose, or defeated hope, or blighted affection : or, more than all, in that moment of sorest agony, when returning

from the grave to the silent house of bereavement—entering the lessened fold, and marking the blank in the flock,—blessed it is to feel the *Abiding Friend* filling the empty place and the aching heart; challenging our trust and reliance in His ability thus to do for us “exceeding abundantly.” Life’s Elim-palms may be gone, but the Divine Pillar-cloud remains! “I will never leave you; I will (lit.) never, never, never forsake you.”

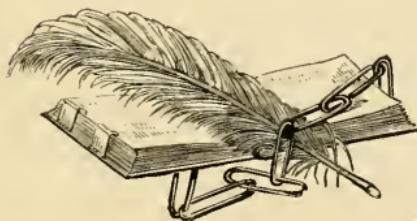
He gives too, not only above what we *ask*, but above what we *think*. Whatever our *thoughts* may be, His thoughts of love transcend them. Able to do for us, and willing to do for us, in a measure exceeding our highest conceptions. What a treasure-house of thoughts is every human bosom! What a strange history it would be (of hope, joy, fear, sadness, and brightness), were each heart unfolded! But it is, indeed, a precious assurance to every child of God, that for every *thought* of his (be they anxious, disquieting, misgiving), there is a counterpart comfort. For the multitude of *thoughts* there is a corresponding multitude of *consolations*! “Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy *thoughts* which are to usward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee; if I would declare and speak of them they are more than can be numbered.” Nay, verily, God’s comforting thoughts outweigh and outbalance all our experiences of sadness and sorrow. “For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee!”

“ Great our need, but greater far
Is our Father’s loving power ;
He upholds each mighty star,
He unfolds each tiny flower.

Ask not *how*, but trust Him still;
Ask not *when*, but wait His will;
Simply on His word rely,
God shall all your need supply.

“ Can we count redemption’s treasure,
Scan the glory of God’s love ?
Such shall be the boundless measure
Of His blessings from above.
All we ask, or think, and more,
He will give in bounteous store ;
No *good* thing will He deny,
God shall all your need supply.”

“ RETURN UNTO THY REST, O MY SOUL, FOR THE LORD HATH
DEALT BOUNTIFULLY WITH THEE.”





VII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city
of habitation."*

—Ps. cxxvii. 7.

Right Guidance. THIS is a stray note from one of the grandest Psalms, whether of the Exodus or the Captivity. Its refrain, four times repeated, is the Lord's 'goodness' and His 'wonderful works'—and that, too, despite of all the 'solitariness' and 'hunger' and 'thirst,' the 'distress and labour,' the 'darkness and shadow of death,' which chequered the experience of the pilgrim tribes. The psalm ends, as does many a life-psalm still, with the attestation, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord" (v. 43).

Observe, however, it was a retrospective song. In its primary application to the march through the Sinai wilderness it could have been sung but falteringly, when the God of the pillar-cloud often seemed to fail "satisfying the longing soul, and filling the hungry soul with goodness" (v. 9). Is it not often so with us? The pillar, alike of cloud and of fire, is there; but we cannot discern, or we scruple to follow it. We are prone to harbour guilty surmises as to

the rectitude and wisdom and faithfulness of the divine procedure. Confronted with baffling providences, the reason of which perplexes our best ingenuity, we are tempted at times to ask, ‘Why these unanswered—nay, defeated prayers?—the urgent plea not only left unheard, but responded to in the way we most dreaded and deprecated—the circuitous route “by the way of the wilderness,” instead of the short and apparently safe one direct to Canaan?’ To take an illustration not inappropriate to the words of our motto-verse, many a mother pleads in earnest supplication that God may overrule events and arrangements so as to prevent her son going to some place—some “city of habitation” that might too surely prove a position of peril or temptation. How is her prayer at times answered? Her child is sent to the distant, dreaded city, instead of being continued under the fostering influences and salutary restraints of home. In silence and solitude, and under the bitter consciousness of frustrated wishes, she is driven to give way to the plaintive soliloquy, “Surely my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God.” So thought and reasoned an illustrious name in the roll of Christian parents—Monica, the devout mother of Augustine. He tells us in his “Confessions” that she had besought earnestly—pleaded night and day—that the God she served would not permit her son to fulfil his own wish and intention of leaving his home and going to Italy. She too truly feared the vices and contaminations of the Roman capital. Yet her prayers were not heard. To Italy he went, and in Rome he sojourned; and the yearning heart he had left behind could only picture, in her hours of lone agony, the moral shipwreck of all that was dearest to her. But the journey, and the resort so dreaded, became to Augustine his spiritual birthplace. That city of moral

darkness was made to him a Bethel for the visions of God, where he erected his life altar, and vowed his eternal vow.

There is surely no small blessedness in the thought that the bounds of our habitation are divinely appointed. Our lots in life—our occupations, our positions, our dwellings—what the fatalist calls our destinies—what heathen mythology attributed to the Fates—all this is marked out by Him who “seeth the end from the beginning.” “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” It is He who takes us to the distant dwelling—it may be the distant land. It is He who takes us from solitude—from grove and woodland and murmuring brook—from the green fields of childhood and youth, and brings us among the eddies and currents of some busy mart. It is He who takes us to our sweet shelters of prosperity—our Elim-groves with their sparkling fountains of joy. It is He who, when He sees meet, conducts us into the land of drought and among the tents of Kedar. He gives the *gourd*—He sends the *worm*. Oh, it is our comfort to know, in this mysterious, ravelled, manifold life of ours, that there is One above and over all, evolving good out of evil and order out of confusion. He sent Onesimus, the runaway slave, to Rome—and Lydia, the seller of purple, to Philippi—and Zaccheus, the tax-gatherer, to Jericho—and Paul, the bigot Pharisee, to Damascus. But these, and other notable examples, were brought thither for their souls' everlasting welfare; and the new song was put into their lips—“Blessed be the Lord, for He hath showed us His marvellous kindness in a strong city!” How many still can tell the same? Their choice of abode seemed to them something purely arbitrary and capricious. A mere trifle seemed, as they thought, to have determined or altered their whole future. But the finger of God had, unknown, been pointing. The

inarticulate voice of God had been calling them forth "by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Human, it may be base and unworthy purposes, are often thwarted and counteracted by the higher purposes of the Supreme Disposer. How many can say, in the words of one who, more than most, could, through a strange series of baffling providences, vindicate the ways of the Almighty to men—"So then," said Egypt's princely ruler, as he confronted the fratricides who stood abashed in his presence—"so then, it was not you that brought me thither, but God."

His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. "A man deviseth his (*own*) ways; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Would that we could believe that at times the denial of our prayers may be the best, the kindest, the paternal answer to them; that when crossed and thwarted in our aspirations after what *we* think is for our good, we are tempted to pronounce with the patriarch the hasty verdict, "All these things are against me!" we could trust the ALL-LOVING to guide our steps, not according to our finite and fallible wisdom, but according to the counsel of His sovereign but gracious will. Many of His own children have had to confront what was bitter and painful—leaving the quiet nooks and valleys of life for the storm-clouds of the mountain. Let them trust their sure, unfaltering Guide, that He will bring light out of darkness, and show that, often in an apparently adverse lot, there are undreamt-of blessings in reversion either for themselves or for others. "To think," says Lady Powerscourt, "that led by Him we are safe from everything. No evil shall ever touch us—evil at the end or evil on the way—all is paved with love." There ought, indeed, to be no such thing as 'misfortune' in the vocabulary of the children of

God. Theirs may not be the bright way, the pleasant way, the way of their own choosing. It may be the very reverse. It may be thorny and sunless and rugged. But it is His appointing, and therefore must be "*the right way*."

Meanwhile be it ours to sit in calmness and confidence under the shadow of our wilderness palm, feeling assured that the day is coming when, with ingathered Israel, we shall be able—no longer in the desert encampment, but within 'the gates of the city'—to take up the noble strain of which our motto-verse forms a part:—

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,
For His mercy endureth for ever.
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
Whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.
And gathered them out of the lands,
From the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.
They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way ;
They found no city to dwell in.
Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,
And He delivered them out of their distresses.
And He led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.
O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men ! "

"MY PRESENCE SHALL GO WITH YOU, AND I WILL
GIVE YOU REST."



VIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“The Lord hath need of them.”

—MATT. xxi. 3.

**Higher
Uses.** GREATLY would an Israelite, in the “Desert of the Wandering,” have been startled and saddened, if, as he sat reclining under the shadow of one of these Elim palms, he had seen an axe suddenly placed at its root; and that which hour after hour had been gladdening him with its screening boughs, laid prostrate with the ground.

Similar, often, is it in the case of the bereaved; when loved ones, under whose shadow they have reposed, have suddenly succumbed to the stroke of the Great Destroyer! In a moment the joy and zest of life seems gone. To-day, it was the gentle rustling of the green leaf overhead. To-morrow, the place that once knew it knows it no more. “The shadow from the heat” is exchanged for the pitiless rays of the scorching sun and a dreary outlook of drifting sands. “How is the staff broken, and the beautiful rod!”

“What mean ye by this waste?” are the words which in such seasons and experiences ring their dreary echo in the

ear. Why that life of consecrated activity so suddenly paralysed? Why this Isaac laid on the altar of sacrifice? Why is yonder Lazarus laid low in the pride of youthful manhood? Why that loving and useful existence lost prematurely to the Church and the world? The seared and withered leaves of autumn drop in their season to the ground; but why this withering of the early blossom,—this abnormal falling of the green and tender foliage? The blighted thorns of the wilderness may be swept away, but why make havoc among that Elim palm-grove?

One reply we have placed at the head of this meditation. They are words once put by the Divine Saviour Himself into the lips of His disciples. We need not stop to note upon what occasion. But like many of the gracious utterances which proceeded from His lips, they were intended and designed to be a quieting solace for His people in all time of their tribulation:—“*The Lord hath need of them.*” There are flowers needed to waft their perfume and swing their censers in the gardens of immortality. There are “ministering ones” needed in the Sanctuary above. Yes, if there are no battles there to fight—no armour to prove—no harps “on the willows” forbidding to sing the Lord’s song,—there are noble embassies of active service in which are embarked the unresting energies of the glorified. Christian mourners! who, it may be, are now lamenting over your withered flowers—the blanks at your table—the music of cherished voices hushed for the for-ever of time. They formed a part of yourselves; sharers of your thoughts and toils, identified with all your plans in life: soothers and strengtheners in your anxious hours—ministering angels at your beds of pain. Their presence had become apparently indispensable: and now their absence or withdrawal is like the expunging of the sun from his place in

the firmament. Too truly you may feel, day by day, in the depths of your lone, aching hearts, how ill you could spare—how much *you* had “need” of ‘*the loved and lost*.’ But take this as the explanation:—let all murmurs be stilled by the higher claim and Claimant. It is a beautiful thought in one of the finest of the sonnets of Dante, as he wails the absence of Beatrice, that “the angels had asked God for her.” We do not require to imagine the intervention of angels:—“THE LORD hath need” of the crowned and glorified. At such deathbeds we are too apt, like Jacob with the mysterious Wrestler at Jabbok, in the agony of nature’s fond struggle, to say, “We will not let thee go!” —But hark! as the wing is pluming for its immortal flight, let the gentle whisper come to us, rebuking all tears, “LET me go, for the Day breaketh!”—let me go, for “*the Lord hath need of me!*”—“If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto my Father!”

Glorify God by meek submission to His holy will.

“Thou hast done well to kneel and say,
‘Since He who gave can take away,
And bid me suffer, I obey.’”

Rejoicing, that the loss you mourn is not that of a talent hidden in the earth: nay, rather, a golden coin stamped in the mint of heaven is withdrawn from its uses in the Church below, for the higher and holier purposes of the Great Master in the Church of the glorified. It is the infant life of the present, passed, it may be at a bound, to its full development in the manhood of heaven. “The Master is come, and calleth for thee” (John xi. 28); and the word accompanying the call is this: “Friend, come up higher!” If it was from strength to strength and from grace to grace on earth, it is now from glory to glory!

“ Up above, the tree with leaf unfading,
 By the everlasting river’s brink,
 And the sea of glass, beyond whose margin
 Never yet the sun was known to sink.

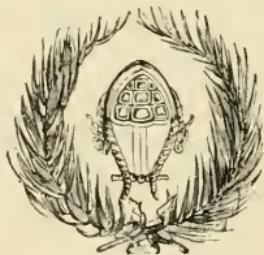
“ Up above, the host no man can number,
 In white robes, a palm in every hand,
 Each some work sublime for ever working
 In the spacious tracts of that great land.

“ Up above, the thoughts that know not anguish,
 Tender care, sweet love for us below ;
 Noble pity, free from anxious terror,
 Larger love, without a touch of woe.

“ Up above, a music that entwineth
 With eternal threads of golden sound,
 The great poem of this strange existence,
 All whose wondrous meaning hath been found.

“ O the rest for ever, and the rapture !
 O the hand that wipes the tears away !
 O the golden homes beyond the sunset,
 And the hope that watches o’er the clay ! ”

“ AT THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD THEY RESTED IN THE
 TENTS, AND AT THE COMMANDMENT OF THE
 LORD THEY JOURNEYED.”





IX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Thy word is very sure, therefore thy servant loveth it."

The Gracious Word. THIS is the precious dew of the Spirit distilling from the branches of the heavenly Palm.

As Jonathan, when faint and downcast and weary, found strength and refreshment in partaking of the honey dropping from the trees in the tangled thicket (1 Sam. xiv. 27); so can every true believer—every true Jonathan ("the beloved of God,") tell as their experience, "Thy Word is sweet unto my taste." "Sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb" (Ps. xix. 10).

Amid our duties and difficulties, our cares and perplexities, how many a pang and tear would it save us, if we went with chastened and inquiring hearts to these sacred oracles! How many trials would be mitigated,—how many sorrows soothed, and temptations avoided, if we forestalled every step in existence with the inquiry, "*What saith the scripture?*"—if we preceded every desert encampment with the inquiry what the will of the Lord is? How few, it is to be feared, make (as they should do), the Bible a final court of appeal—an arbiter for the settlement of all the vexed

questions in the consistory of the soul ; allaying all misgivings with the resolve, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak.” May we be preserved from that saddest phase of modern infidelity, the Sacred Volume classed among the worn and effete books of the past, regarded only with that misnamed “*veneration*” which the antiquary bestows on some piece of mediæval armour—a relic and memorial of bygone days, but unsuitable for an age which has superseded the cruder views of these old “chroniclers,” and inaugurated a new era of religious development. Vain dreamers ! “For ever, O God, Thy Word is settled in heaven.” “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” “The Word of the Lord is tried.” What a crowd of witnesses could be summoned to give personal evidence of its preciousness and value. How many aching heads would raise themselves from their pillows and tell of their obligations to its soothing messages of love and power ! How many deathbeds could send their occupants with pallid lips to tell of the staff which upheld them in the dark valley. How many, in the hour of bereavement, could lay their finger on the promise that first dried the tear from their eye and brought back the smile to their saddened countenances ! How many voyagers in life’s tempestuous ocean, now landed on the heavenly shore, would be ready to hush their golden harps, and descend to earth with the testimony that this was the blessed beacon-light which enabled them to avoid the treacherous reefs—perilous rocks of temptation—and guided them to their desired haven !

Reason, with thy flickering torch, thou hast never yet guided to such sublime mysteries as these ! *Philosophy*, thou hast never yet, as this Book has done, taught a man how to die ! *Science*, thou hast penetrated the arcana of

nature, sunk thy shafts into earth's recesses, unburied its stores, counted its strata, measured the height of its massive pillars down to the very pedestals of primeval granite ; thou hast tracked the lightning, traced the path of the tornado, uncurtained the distant planet, foretold the coming of the comet and the return of the eclipse. But thou hast never been able to gauge the depths of the human soul, with its mighty cravings and yearnings, or to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved ?"

No ; this antiquated Volume is still the "Book of books," the oracle of oracles, the beacon of beacons ; the poor man's treasury, the sick man's health, the dying man's life. It has shallows for the child to walk in, depths for giant intellect to explore and adore ! Philosophy, if she would but own it, is indebted here for the noblest of her maxims. Poetry, for the loftiest of her themes. Painting has gathered here her noblest inspiration. Music has ransacked these golden stores for the grandest of her strains. And if there be life in the Church of Christ,—if her ministers and missionaries are carrying the torch of salvation through the world, where is that torch lighted but at these same altar fires ? When a philosophy, "falsely so called," shall become dominant, and seek, with its proud dogmas, to supersede this divine system ; when the old Bible of Augustine and Luther, of Baxter and Bunyan, of Brainerd and Martyn, is clasped and closed,—the only code of morality worth speaking of will have perished from the earth. Dagon will have taken the place of God's ark ; the world's funeral pile may be kindled.

Let us value our Bibles, "*dwelling*," like Deborah, under these heavenly palm-trees. As they are the souvenirs of our earliest childhood, the gift of a mother's love, or the pledge of a father's affection, so let them be our fondest

treasures,—the directory of daily life, the friend of prosperity, the solace in adversity, the anodyne in suffering, the balm in bereavement; and in the prospect of our own departure let them be the keepsakes and heirlooms which we are most desirous to transmit to our children's children. As we sat under this Elim shade in life's earliest morning, let us be found under it at life's sunset hour; when, stirred by the breath of even, the fronds whisper to the last the name of Jesus!

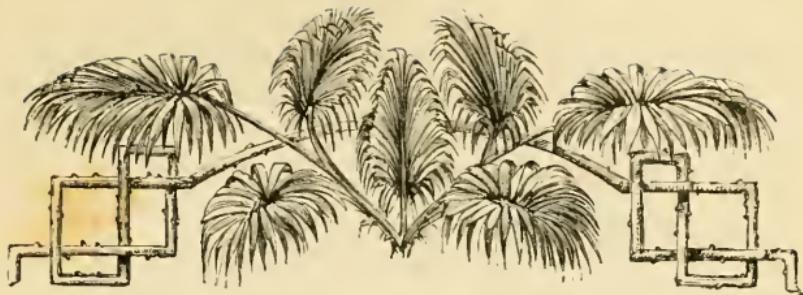
“ We praise Thee for the radiance
Which from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.

“ It is the golden casket
Where gems of truth are stored;
The never-failing Treasure
Of the Eternal Word.

“ It is the chart and compass
That o'er life's surging sea,
Mid mists and rocks and quicksands,
Still guide, O Christ, to Thee.

“ Instruct Thy wandering pilgrims,
By this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended,
They see Thee face to face.”

“ I WAIT ON THE LORD, MY SOUL DOETH WAIT, AND IN
HIS WORD DO I HOPE.”



X.

*“ This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“ Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

—REV. xix. 6.

A Reigning Saviour. No Palm in all the grove (specially for the woe-worn pilgrim) has a more gracious or inviting shadow than that whose leaves seem to whisper, “ Thy God reigneth.” To change the simile, it forms the foundation truth of all comfort. An old writer speaks of it as the first word spelt in the afflicted man’s primer.

Our motto-verse has an interest of its own, in connection with what precedes in the chapter of which it is a part. On the announcement of the destruction of the mystic Babylon in the immediate context, a voice emanates from the celestial throne, “ Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great ;” and then is heard in response, as it were, “ the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘ Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’ ”

It is striking to note the contrast between the way in which the awful catastrophe, described in the previous chapter, is received on earth and in heaven. On earth there is

heard nothing but “weeping and lamentation.” The kings and the princes, the mighty men and the merchants, are depicted as robing themselves in sackcloth and casting dust upon their heads. In a bold figure of poetry, a portentous column of smoke is represented catching the eye of the mariners on the distant ocean, as they are speeding along in their vessels freighted with the produce and luxuries of the world. (v. 17). “All the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city? . . . and they cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness, for in one hour is she made desolate.”

Such is the case with an awestruck world; but how is it with the Church alike in heaven and upon earth? There the smoke of that tremendous conflagration is the signal for a song of jubilee. No tongue is silent. It is taken up by small and great, redeemed and unredeemed; and the tide of triumph increases as it rolls. Every fresh view of this divine judgment affords matter for loftier exultation. At first, the rapt seer heard no more than “a great voice of much people in *heaven*.” But the music of the celestial choirs is caught up by the dwellers in the lower sanctuary. It seems “like the voice of a great multitude.” Louder still, it becomes “as the voice of many waters;” and then, with an ever-augmenting volume, it is like “the roll of mighty thunderings:”—“Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”

It is a typical representation of the unfolding of the wisdom and righteousness of all God’s dispensations and purposes to His Church—partly evolved in this world, fully

evolved in the world to come. The song of His people, often raised on earth in feeble, trembling, faltering accents, will be an ever-deepening one, as the “why” and the “wherefore” of these dealings become gradually more manifest.

It is hard and difficult often here, to recognise the divine love and wisdom, and to own the rectitude of the dark dispensation. But “what we know not now we shall know hereafter.” In the Great day of disclosures—the cloudless, sinless, sorrowless morning of immortality—the mysteries of Providence will be unravelled ; every event will be seen reflected as in a glorious mirror ; all the now veiled purposes will be fully revealed, perplexing dealings vindicated. “In Thy light, O God, we shall see light.” Each lip will then be brought to confess that this reigning Lord has been ‘righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works.’ Each fresh retrospect will cause the hearts of the Redeemed to bound with holier rapture, and their tongues to thrill with louder notes of exultation. The gradual revelation of God’s earthly plan will afford new matter and new motive for praise. Not until the various component parts of the divine dealings are brought together—not till we view them as a whole—can we see their unity and admire their grandeur.

The present life, in its conflicting relations, its discords and confusions, is the tuning of the musical instruments before the great hallelujah chorus—the magnificent harmonies of Heaven. Then that chorus, like the song of adoration of the exulting myriads in the seer’s vision, will become a louder and yet louder ascription of praise, deepening till its effluent waves of sound become like the noise of mighty thunderings. And this verse at the head of our meditation will be the everlasting refrain !

Nor can we omit to add further, that that Sovereign Ruler

is the same “Lion of the tribe of Judah” into whose hands, in the beginning of the Apocalyptic visions, was put the sealed roll of Providence (Rev. v. 1-6). It is Christ, the exalted King and Head of His Church, His brows crowned with many crowns, who holds the reins of universal empire ! We can claim Him as a *Brother*, we can love Him as a *Friend*, we can adore Him as a *God* ! We repeat, that glorious Keystone which crowns the arch is hidden at times behind the clouds. We see it not ! Often we lose the divine footsteps—often we look with straining eye for one fringe of light in the darkened firmament. But He is *there*!—“that same Jesus :”—the might of deity slumbering in His arm, the tenderness of humanity glowing at His heart. Jesus is “the Lord omnipotent,” and *He* “reigneth” ! Jesus reigneth ! Then perish every desponding thought. Jesus reigneth ! Then, though heart and flesh faint and fail, He will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever. Jesus reigneth ! He reigneth to love, to pity, to plead, to sympathise, to bless ; He reigneth to sustain the needy, to comfort the broken-hearted, to reclaim the wandering, to save the lost ; He reigneth to justify, to sanctify, and finally to glorify ; and He *will* live and reign over Zion triumphant as well as militant “through all generations !”—the object of adoring praise and gratitude to His Church through all eternity—their light, their life, their strength, their portion, their all in all !

Oh, can we say, with lowly, joyful confidence, seated under the shelter of so glorious a palm—“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; the sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre ?”

“ Hark ! the song of jubilee,
Loud as mighty thunder’s roar,
Or the fulness of the sea
When it breaks upon the shore.

' Hallelujah ! for the Lord
God omnipotent doth reign.'
Hallelujah ! let the word
Echo round the earth and main.

" He shall reign from pole to pole
With illimitable sway ;
He shall reign when, like a scroll,
Yonder heavens have passed away.
Then the end : beneath His rod
Man's last enemy shall fall.
Hallelujah ! Christ in God,
God in Christ, is all in all ! "

" THE LORD THY GOD IN THE MIDST OF THEE IS MIGHTY ; HE
WILL SAVE, HE WILL REJOICE OVER THEE WITH JOY ;
HE WILL REST IN HIS LOVE, HE WILL JOY
OVER THEE WITH SINGING."





XI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”
—Ps. xxiii. 3.

Divine Leading. THERE is a world of comfort contained in the simple words, “He leadeth me.” It was the cloudy pillar of old which conducted the Hebrew host from encampment to encampment ; which marked out for them their Elims and their Marahs. “So it was alway : the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then, after that, the children of Israel journeyed : and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed : they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered ; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel” (Num. ix. 16, 17, 23 ; also Num. x. 35, 36).

The God of the pillar-cloud still directs the journeyings of His people. He still appointeth the bounds of their habitation ; and if His leadings be not to the bitter pool, but often (most frequently) to some gracious palm-grove ;—in the words of one of the saintliest spirits of the passing generation, in referring to the loveliness of his appointed earthly home, “Oh, for peace to feel that it is but a beautiful tent pitched in the wilderness ; and by the exceeding mercy of my God in calling me from darkness to His marvellous light, I may add, pitched on the green margin of the well of living water.” * Whether, however, bitter or sweet, joyful or sorrowful, how consolatory the assurance that our lives are no fortuitous concurrence of events and circumstances ; we are not like weeds thrown in the waters, to be tossed and whirled in the eddying pools of capricious accident, our future a self-appointed one. There is a Divine hand and purpose in all that befalls us. Every man’s existence is a biography, written chapter by chapter, line by line, by God Himself. It is not the mere cartoon or outline sketched by the Divine Being, which we are left to fill in ; but all the minute and delicate shadings are inserted by Him. Looking no further than our relation to Him as *creatures*, it is impossible for a moment to entertain the thought of our being beyond the leadings of God, and to speak of a life of self-government and self dependence. The complex machinery of the outer world, dumb inanimate nature in all its integral parts, is upheld by Him. “He weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.” “He counts the number of the stars.” He guides Orion and Arcturus in their magnificent marchings. If one of these orbs were to be jostled from its place—plucked from its silent throne in the heavens, it is well

* Memorials of Dr. M’Leod Campbell, p. 60.

known that the equipoise and nice balancing of the material system would be fatally disturbed—anarchy and revolution would reign triumphant. And shall we own Him as the leader of stars and planets, and ignore His sovereignty over the human spirit? Shall we acknowledge that He is Lord in the universe of matter, and not supreme in the empire of thought and human volition? Nay, “His kingdom ruleth over ALL.” Angel, archangel, cherub, and seraph; man, beast, worm, “these all wait upon Thee!” He “leads in righteousness.” He has an infinite reason for all He does. It is not for us to attempt to unravel the tangled thread of Providence. Israel cried for deliverance from Egypt. Their cry was answered. How? By leading them at once to Canaan? No, as we have seen, by a forty years’ period of probation and discipline. God is often, like Jacob of old, blessing the sons of Joseph with crossed hands. We, in our half-blind, short-sighted faith, would presume to dictate to Him, and prejudge the wisdom and rectitude of His procedure. We are tempted to say with Joseph, “Not so, my father.” But like the old patriarch, “He guides His hands wittingly.” As the sheep of His pasture, He may not be leading you along the bright meadow or sunny slope; He may be lingering amid stunted herbage; He may be turning down some bramble thicket,—plunging into gloomy forest glades, while acres of rich sunny pasture are close by. But He sees what *you did not see*; He sees an adder here; He sees a lion there; He sees pitfalls here; He sees a precipice there. He knows you better, He loves you better, than to set you in slippery places, and cast you down to destruction. He sees, if that fortune had been unbroken, that dream of ambition realised, that clay-idol undethroned,—the alienated heart would have gradually, but terribly, lapsed away from Him. Trust

Him. "We expect," says Evans, "the blessing in our way, He chooses to bestow it in His." In the midst of perplexing dealings say, "*I know*" (you cannot say "*I see*"), but let faith say, "I know, O God, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

What a grandeur and dignity, what a safety and security it would give to life, if we sought ever to regard it as a leading of the Shepherd ;—God shaping our purposes and destinies, that wherever we go, or wherever our friends go, He is with us ! Even in earthly journeyings, if our pathway be the great and wide sea,—“He gives to the sea His decree”—winds and waves and storms are His voice. If it be careering along the highway, nothing but that tiny iron thread between us and death,—*He* curbs the wild frenzy of the fiery courser ; He puts the bit in his iron mouth ; He gives His angels charge over us to bear us up and keep us in all our ways. If it be our position in the world ; He metes out every drop in the cup, He assigns us our niche in His temple, fills or empties our coffers, makes vacant the chairs of our homesteads. Let us seek to say, in the spirit of Galileo when he became blind, “Whatever is pleasing to God shall be pleasing to me.” *We* can take no more than the near, the limited, the earthly view of His dealings : let us pause for the infinite disclosures of eternity. Look at the husbandman labouring in his field. All this deep ploughing is for the insertion of the needful seed. In doing the work, he may appear to act roughly. Ten thousand insects nestling quietly in their homes in the ground are rudely unhoused. All at once their ceiled dwellings are pulled asunder. Many a happy commonwealth is scattered and overthrown in the upturned furrow, —little worlds of life and being demolished by the ruthless, remorseless ploughshare. So, some of our earthly schemes

may be assailed,—our worldly treasures scattered by the iron teeth of misfortune. But all is preparatory to a higher good, a harvest of rich blessing crowning the soul, as He does the year with His goodness, and making its paths drop fatness !

There is a beautiful saying in the 94th Psalm, “ The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance ; but judgment shall return unto *righteousness* ” (14, 15). A balm-word to all poor afflicted ones. Judgment often at times seems divorced—deflected *from* righteousness. We can discern no righteousness, no mercy, no good in His dispensations. Like the sun setting at night, all is darkness. But that sun will return. It will have a morrow’s rising again. Judgment shall return in righteousness. “ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

“ Hereafter thou shalt know where God doth lead thee,
His darkest dealings trace ;
And by those fountains where His love will feed thee,
Behold Him face to face.

“ Then bow thine head, and He shall give thee meekness,
Bravely to do His will ;
So shall arise His glory in thy weakness,
O struggling soul, be still.

“ Watch on the tower, and listen by the gateway,
Nor weep to wait alone ;
Take thou thy spices, and some angel straightway
Shall roll away the stone.

“ Thus wait, thus watch, till He the last link sever,
And changeless rest be won ;
Then in His glory thou shalt bask for ever,
Fear not the clouds—PRESS ON.”

“ THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD WENT BEFORE THEM, TO SEARCH OUT A RESTING-PLACE FOR THEM.”



XII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the
world giveth, give I unto you."*

—JOHN xiv. 27.

The Farewell Gift. No shadow of the figurative grove of Elim is more grateful to the children of humanity than this. It is in Jesus alone, and in His finished work, that the beautiful words of the Evangelical Prophet are fulfilled in the case of every pilgrim to the true Canaan,—“My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings and in quiet *resting-places*” (Is. xxxii. 18).

The circumstances in which the Saviour uttered the words of our motto-verse were interesting and peculiar, and give an intense pathos to His declaration. It was at a time, one would have thought, of the deepest dispeace and disquietude to His own soul; a time when the saying, “My peace I give unto you,” would have seemed a strange and equivocal boon: for the shadows of the cross were gathering around Him. Some consolation, higher than earth could afford, was needed, when the Shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep to be scattered. In the clouds of that dark, troubled horizon, He set the bow of covenant

Peace. His utterance was more than a promise:—it is couched in the formula of a last Will—a Testamentary deed. It is the dying legacy which the Prince of Peace bequeaths to His Church and people in every age. Let us note some of its characteristics.

It is a *purchased* peace. That palm whispers pre-eminently “the name of Jesus”—“Peace through the blood of His cross.” In no other way could it have been procured. By no other could it be bestowed. No voice but the voice which exclaimed in dying accents, “It is finished,” can say to the troubled tempest-tossed soul—“Peace, be still!” In the familiar Bible narrative, we see the heathen sailors rowing hard to bring the vessel to land, in whose hold was the fugitive prophet. It was in vain. “The sea wrought, and was tempestuous”—wave after wave baffled strength of oar and muscle. What was their expedient? The sacrifice of the one life was demanded and surrendered for the sake of the others! So it was with the true Jonah. When He was taken and cast into the deep, that deep was hushed into a calm, its fury stilled, every tumultuous billow was rocked to rest—“The sea ceased from her raging.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He has done all, and suffered all, and procured all for us;—left nothing to be supplemented by human merit. In the words of an old theologian, “We which have believed do enter into rest, and that by ceasing from our own works, as God did from His.”

It is a *perfect* peace. It is no simulation—no counterfeit. There is no flaw in these title-deeds. It is a peace founded on everlasting truth and everlasting righteousness, securing alike the vindication of the Divine law and the manifestation of the Divine glory. It is a peace with God above, and peace with conscience within—peace secured by the

Redeemer on the Cross, and ratified by the Kingly Intercessor on the Throne. Like the weary bird, after tracking its way across leagues of waste ocean, the believer can enter the opened window of the True Ark, and sing the song of an older heir of covenant blessings, "Return unto thy Rest (thy Peace), O my soul."

It is a *permanent* peace. As such, it is "not as the world giveth." Many of the world's best blessings, those which are considered to minister most effectually to outward happiness and inward tranquillity, ours to-day, may be gone to-morrow:—we have no pledge or guarantee for their continuance. They are fed from the low marshy grounds of earth, dependent on fitful seasons and capricious showers. But the peace of Christ, being from heaven, is a perennial stream; it is fed from surer supply than glacier Alps, and it rolls on in undiminished fulness and volume, in summer's drought and in winter's cold. It is irrespective and independent of all outward accidents. It bears up and sustains amid the harassments of business, the crushings of poverty, the weariness of sickness, the pangs of bereavement, the shadows of death. Well may the author of "*The Pilgrim's Progress*" give the name of PEACE to the chamber in which Christian lay, and whose window opened toward the sunrising!

It is said of Goethe, the great German, that in one of those dark, unsatisfied hours in which his mighty intellect and soul groped after the true Rest, he thus recorded his undefined longings for that which he had failed to attain:—

"Fairest among heaven's daughters,
Thou who stillest pain and woe,
Pourest thy refreshing waters
On the thirsty here below:

Whither tends this restless striving ?
Faint and tired, I long for rest.
Heaven-born peace,
Come and dwell within my breast ! ”

These words were found on a scrap of writing paper lying on his writing table. A devoted friend of kindred intellectual pursuits, but one who had personally experienced the shade of the Elim grove and tasted its perennial fountains, and who therefore knew what alone could quench these unsated aspirations, wrote on the other side, “ *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* ”

PEACE—true peace. Intellect cannot bestow it ; wealth cannot purchase it. Men, in their quest of it, entrench and buttress themselves around with creature comforts, and away from corroding care, invite the angel of peace to come and over downy couches to sing the longed-for lullaby ! The lullaby is sung, “ Peace, peace,” but often it is only to awaken the echo of dissatisfaction, “ No peace.”

Speed your flight, O weary wanderer, under the shelter of this heavenly Palm. The bough on which your earthly nest was built may have been felled by the axe or broken by the storm ; but “ He is our peace.” And as driven by the windy tempest your cry is, “ O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, grant me Thy peace ! ” may it be yours to listen to the glad response, “ My peace I give unto you ;”—“ Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

“ We ask for peace, O Lord !
Thy children ask Thy peace :
Not what the world calls rest—
That toil and care should cease ;

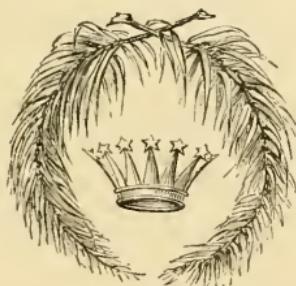
That through bright sunny hours
Calm life should fleet away,
And tranquil night should fade
In smiling day ;—

It is not for such peace that we would pray.

“ We ask Thy peace, O Lord !
Through storm, and fear, and strife,
To light and guide us on
Through a long struggling life ;
To lean on Thee, entranced,
In calm and perfect rest ;—
Give us that peace, O Lord !
Divine and blest,

Thou keepest for those hearts that love Thee best.”

“ THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND IS
STAYED ON THEE ; BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE.”





XIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"And the Lord had compassion upon her, and said, Weep not."

The Compassion of Jesus. THE fronds of the desert palm-tree are never so beautiful, as when seen thickly gemmed with the dews of the Eastern night—nature's teardrops.

With reverence may we say the same of the Heavenly Palm. Jesus is never so gracious or attractive as when we are called, as here, to note His look of compassion—His tears of sympathy—denoting the tenderness of divine human affection. Observe, it was the sight of *woe* (the contemplation of human misery) which at Nain stirred to its depths that Heart of hearts.

"Forth from the city gate,
As evening shadows lengthen o'er the plain,
And the hushed crowd in reverent silence wait,
Passed out a funeral train.

"Chief of the mourners there,
Slow following, with feeble steps, the dead,
In the sad travail of the soul's despair,
Bowed down her stricken head.

“ For him she wept forlorn,
 Of care the solace, and of age the stay,
Whose silver cord was broken, ere the morn
 Had brightened into day.”

It would seem as if the Lord of Love could not look upon grief, without that grief becoming His own. In the similar case of Lazarus, it was not the bitter thought of a lost and dead friend which unsealed the fountain of His own tears. This it could not be; because four days previously He had spoken in calm composure of his departure; and when He stood in the graveyard, He knew that in a few moments the victim of death would have his eyes rekindled with living lustre. At Bethany (as here at Nain), it was simply the spectacle of human *suffering* that made its irresistible appeal to His emotional nature. The rod of human compassion touched the Rock of Ages, and the streams of tenderness gushed forth. “When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews weeping which came with her . . . *Jesus wept.*” “When the Lord saw” this poor widow, “*He had compassion on her.*” He hears her bitter, heartrending weeping in the midst of the mourners, and it is worthy of observation—utters the soothing, sympathetic *word*, before He utters the godlike mandate.

Nor should we overlook the fact that it was *but a word* He uttered. This reveals an exquisite and touching feature in the Saviour’s humanity. It attests how intensely delicate and sensitive, as well as true, that humanity was. When we meet a mourner after a severe trial, we shrink from the meeting; glad, perhaps, when a sad and dreaded call of courtesy is over. There is a studied reserve in making reference to the blank; or, if that reference is made, it is short, in a passing word. The press of the hand often expresses what the lips shrink from uttering. In that

vivid picture we have of patriarchal grief, Job's friends and mourners sat for seven days at his side, and not a syllable was spoken. It was so here with Jesus. He (even He) does not intrude with a long utterance of sympathy. With a tear in His eye, and a suppressed sob, all He says is, "*Weep not.*" It was the same afterwards with Mary at Bethany. There was not even the one word ; nothing but the significant *tears*.

Behold, then, the beautiful and heartfelt condolence of a Fellow-mourner—"the Brother born for adversity." "*When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her!*" That weeping, forlorn woman had no lack of other sorrowing friends. Her case seemed to be matter of notoriety. Many went out to mingle their tears with hers ; but the sympathy of all these could only go a certain way. They could not be expected to enter into the peculiarities of her woe. Human sympathy is, at best, imperfect ; sometimes selfish, always finite and temporary. Not so the sympathy of Him who joined the funeral procession. He could say, as none else can, "*I know your sorrows.*" The condolence of the kindest friend on earth knows a limit,—that of Jesus knows none. Who knows but in that gentle utterance of tender feeling, and in the deep compassion which dictated it, the Son of Man, the virgin-born, may have had in view another "*Mother,*" whose hour of similar bereavement was now at hand ; when His own death was to be "*the sword*" which was to "*pierce her soul.*" The calming word, doubtless, further pointed onwards to a happier time, when in a sorrowless world, "*God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces.*"

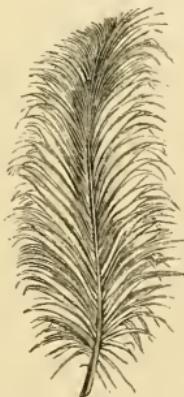
Remember the Saviour and sympathiser of Nain is now the same ! He *had* compassion—He *has* compassion still. He who stopped the bier on that summer's night in the

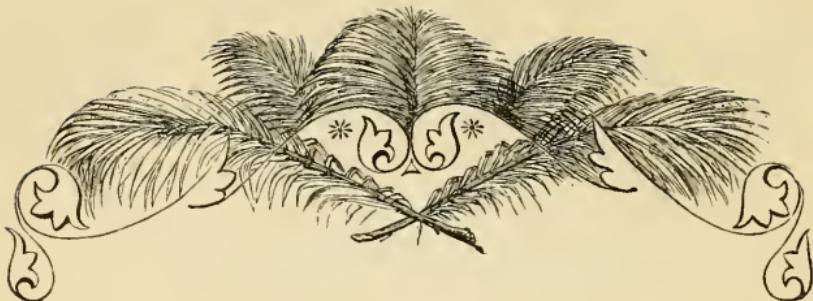
plains of Jezreel ever lives, and loves, and supports, and pities ; and *will* continue to pity, until pity be no longer needed, in a world of light and purity and peace.

“ And thus He always stands,
Friend of the mourner, wiping tears away ;
Wherever sorrow lifts her suppliant hands,
And faith remains to pray.

“ Where'er the woe-worn flee
From the rude conflict of this world distress,
Consoling words He whispers, ‘ Come to Me,
And I will give you rest ! ’ ”

“ AND THERE SHALL BE A TABERNACLE FOR A SHADOW IN
THE DAYTIME FROM THE HEAT, AND FOR A PLACE OF
REFUGE, AND FOR A COVERT FROM STORM AND
FROM RAIN.”





XIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"The Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no
unrighteousness in Him."*

—Ps. xcii. 15.

The Lord
upright.

THE Psalm from which these words are taken is entitled "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath Day."* It is also supposed to have been a Temple song: that, from the reference to the instrumental music of the Temple—"the instrument of ten strings, the psaltery, the harp,"—it may probably have been intended to be used for the public service of the sanctuary. Nor was this use to be on Sabbath only. From verse 2, it has been

* The structure of the Psalm is peculiar, and forms one of the many illustrations of that symmetry and nice balancing of parts which the Hebrew poets and psalmists seem specially to delight in. The 8th verse occupies the middle of the Psalm. It is the shortest verse in it—consisting, in the Hebrew, of one line—the pivot (so to speak) on which the rest turns. (Lit. "Thou art height in eternity, O Lord.") On either side of this central one stand two verses, in the original of three lines each. All the other verses, preceding and following these, are composed exactly of two lines, while the first four and the last four verses correspond with one another in their strains of joy.—See *Thrush on the Psalms*.

further surmised that the psalm may have been employed at the daily offering of the morning and evening sacrifice—"To shew forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night." Remembering, moreover, in connection with the name of this Volume, how the Temple was decorated with palm as well as cedar (the palm, as previously noted, chiselled by the graver's art all round the sacred walls, interlaced with open flower-work and cherubic figures, while the doors and roof were from the forests of Lebanon), how natural that these two trees should be taken to symbolise the character of the acceptable and accepted worshipper (ver. 12).

It may well be designated, from its whole scope, 'the Psalm of old age.' The writer seems to delight in rehearsing the experiences of a by-past happy, because holy life. He compares, as we have just said, the true Believer—"the Righteous man"—to the gracefulness and beauty of an Elim-palm, combined with the strength and indestructible vigour of a Lebanon cedar. Not like the trees of many an earthly forest, whose bared tops proclaim that they have outlived their best, and that they are only the ghostly memorials of what once they were; these spiritual trees of the Lord's planting are "full of sap." They know no decrepitude, no decay—"They still bring forth fruit in old age" (ver. 14).

Old age without religion is the saddest of experiences:—gathering up the faded flowers of pleasure; attempting to drain the exhausted bowl, or to extract honey from the empty comb. Nothing, on the other hand, is so attractive and lovely as the closing life of a true Christian—an old veteran warrior about to sheathe his sword and pass to his crown. How calm, and tranquil, and subdued! Like wine mellowed by years; or like the mouldering, ivy-encircled

ruin—grandest in its decay ! His outward man may be perishing, but his inward man is renewed day by day. His life is hid with Christ in God :—his roots are moored in the Rock of Ages. Lessons of tribulation have wrought patience. Christ becomes more and more precious. Heaven has more of the aspect and association of *home*. Gleams of its glory come flashing on the aged countenance, as the rising sun tips the mountain-top before it has reached the horizon. Oh, the hoary head is indeed “a crown of glory” when thus “found in the way of righteousness ;” and when death *does* come—the stern Reaper with his sickle,—it is only to fall like a shock of corn in its season, fully ripe !

Beautiful, too (what our motto-verse may be regarded as embodying), is the dying testimony of such—“*To shew that the Lord is upright.*” This is the end of their ‘planting’ and ‘growing’ and ‘flourishing’ (verses 13, 14). The sweet singer, in this last note of praise, repeats the opening stanza, as to the attestation, borne, morning and evening, to Jehovah’s faithfulness. The palm-tree waves its joyous tribute by the side of the Elim fountains. The cedar, as it battles with the storm on high Lebanon, wafts it on the breath of the tempest. It is a testimony to God’s unchanging fidelity to His covenant promises, and that, too, amid all diversities of rank and age and circumstance. Palms of the lowly valley, cedars of the lofty mountain—rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned—are ready to witness that the Lord has proved Himself ‘upright,’ and that not one of His declarations have failed. He has made the shoes of His people “iron and brass,” and to the very close of the wilderness journey “as their days, so shall their strength be” (Deut. xxxiii. 25).

The writer finally appends his own subscription and per-

sonal experience to all he has just said. He has been painting no ideal picture—describing no mere poetic dream. He is himself ready, with the closing harp-strain, to endorse all his utterances of sober prosaic truth—that the righteous *is* the happy, joyous, God-protected man he has described him to be. “He is my rock,” he adds, “and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” I have tried Him, and He is all He said, and all He promised. “He is my rock.” As a rock I have built on Him, as a rock I have stretched myself under His shadow:—“O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” It reminds us of the close of some of Paul’s Epistles—“The salutation of me, Paul, written in mine own hand.” That blind Apostle-prisoner seems to have employed an amanuensis to take down at his dictation the rest of his letter. But he cannot refrain tracing upon the parchment the closing salutation or postscript, in his own autograph, thus to seal and ratify all that had been written. So it is here. “He is my rock.” Witness my signature. I have tested His faithfulness; I now firmly rely upon it. I warble this farewell attestation “on the harp with solemn sound”—with earnest soul-musing, as it means:—not only, as has been said, “with harp-strings, but heart-strings.” “I believe, therefore have I spoken.”

Delightful and precious are such old age and deathbed testimonies as these to the sustaining grace of God. The world of unrealities is at an end then. The gold is separated from the alloy. We see the real strength of the vessel when left to itself to grapple with the hurricane:—in other words, the power of Gospel truth and religious principle. The noblest and most convincing of all Christian evidences is to lead the sceptic to a dying couch, and there, amid languor and depression (it may even be racking pain,) E

to let him hear prayer mingling with praise—the alternate breathings of submission and thankfulness, arising from the consciousness of the presence of a gracious though unseen Saviour, and the quickening anticipations of an opening heaven ! Can that sustaining Gospel be a lie ? Can that dying ‘ grace ’ be an illusion ? Can that Redeemer—that Being who seems to be clung to almost as a near and loving friend—be nothing but a myth or phantom of the brain ? When the feeble lips are proclaiming, “ He is my rock,” are they mistaking for a solid footing what is like the desert mirage or the shifting sand ? Nay. The Rock of Ages is a sublime reality. That aged believer has clung to Jesus as an Almighty Saviour on earth. He has loved Him, prayed to Him, praised Him, committed his eternal all to Him ; and now the music of that same Name refreshes his soul in death. “ He is my rock.” Oh, that such may be *our* testimony ! Sitting calmly under the Beloved’s shadow, when the day is about to break, and all other shadows to flee for ever away—“ Let me die the death of *the righteous*, and let my last end be like his ! ”

“ When I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death ;
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

“ AND A MAN SHALL BE AS AN HIDING-PLACE FROM THE WIND,
AND A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST ; AS RIVERS OF
WATER IN A DRY PLACE ; AS THE SHADOW
OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND.”



XV.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

*“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being
made a curse for us.”*

—GAL. iii. 13.

Full Satisfaction. “CURSE!”—“the curse of the law ;” a curse resting on the soul of man, and on the fair earth which forms his dwelling !

“ Man’s world is pain and terror,
He found it pure and fair,
And wove in nets of sorrow
The golden summer air.
Black, hideous, cold, and dreary,
Man’s curse, not God’s, is there !

“ Man’s world is bleak and bitter ;
Wherever he has trod
He spoils the tender beauty
That blossoms on the sod,
And blasts the loving heaven
Of the great, good world of God ! ”

From that black, blighting, blasting curse, man and his world are *redeemed*.

“ REDEEMED ! ” In an earthly sense, none knew, or could

appreciate so fully the significance of that word, as pilgrim Israel, when, after their wondrous Exodus, they sat under the shadow of these Elim-palms in the Sinai wilderness. The echoes of their great redemption song was still lingering in their ears, “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast *redeemed*: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation” (Ex. xv. 13).

It was the type and foreshadow of a greater deliverance—a deliverance which has given birth to a grander strain, “Thou hast *redeemed* us unto God by Thy blood !”

And who was this Redeemer? We read in classic story that Pylades laid down his life for Orestes his *friend*. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us.” He, the true Aaron, with the burning coals in his censer of love, hath come between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed! He, the true David, when the lion and the bear were rushing on his defenceless flock, encountered them single-handed and alone, and rescued them from “the mountains of prey!” He, the true antetypical scapegoat, has had the sins of His spiritual Israel laid upon Him, and has borne away the *curse* for ever, into a land of forgetfulness! The arm of the law is powerless. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!” To revert again to that ‘birthday of freedom’ so intimately associated with the encampment of the Hebrews at Elim; that must have indeed been a memorable morning when the victorious host stood on the other side of the Red Sea. Terrible, too, these trophies of Divine vengeance that strewed the beach; the bodies of Pharaoh’s warriors, with the sword still fastened by their side or clutched with nerveless hands. Or, to take a kindred incident in the future Jewish annals, awful must have been that spectacle—the mailed legions

of Sennacherib—who had, the night before, been gathering up their strength like a proud wave, to dash themselves against the towers of Zion. When the morning dawns, the 180,000 are still there, with sword and spear and helmet and streaming banner ; but these banners wave over a silent camp. The trumpet lies beside silent lips ;—it is a camp of *death*. Sword and spear are still intact ; but the arms that wielded them are impotent. The destroying angel has descended at midnight, and converted the Assyrian tent into a sepulchre !

“ The battlefield lies still and cold,
While stars, that watch in silent night,
Gleam here and there on weapons bright
In the dead sleepers’ slackened hold.”

So it is with the curses of the law. Like the weapons of Pharaoh or the Assyrians, they are still there ; each demanding satisfaction, and declaring, “ The soul that sinneth it shall die.” But the Great Angel has come down in the night of earth’s moral and spiritual darkness and paralysed them. He has, by His own doing and dying, rendered the law powerless to smite. “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us !”

Child of God, member of the ransomed family of the true Israel which He hath purchased with His own blood, “ as far as east is distant from the west, so far hath He removed your transgressions from you.” Amazing picture ! You can take the wings of the morning, and make the sun your chariot—traverse intervening oceans and continents till that sun dips his burning wheels in the western wave ; and when you take a retrospective view of that magnificent circuit, think of it as God’s own emblem

of the distance to which He is willing to remove your transgressions from *your* sight and His own !

Or take another kindred scripture, depicting the same wondrous truth in equally impressive figure. It is the midst of a wide, waste wilderness of waters, the illimitable horizon stretching on every side ; and when the sounding line is let down, it cannot fathom the depth, it fails to reach the bottom. There, in the solitudes of that voiceless ocean, a plunge is heard. The surface is ruffled only for a moment ; but the waves resume their wonted play,—all is calm again. The load, whatever it be, is never more seen. It is buried somewhere in these dark caverns. No spirit of the deep can ever come up from the silent caves to tell its story. Ships cross and recross where it fell, but no milestone is left on the unstable highway, to mark the spot. The sea can be tempted by no bribe to give up the secret of its keeping ; it is lost from sight, and trace, and memory, for ever. That is a picture of what God is willing to do to you, and to me. “Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea” (Micah vii. 19.)

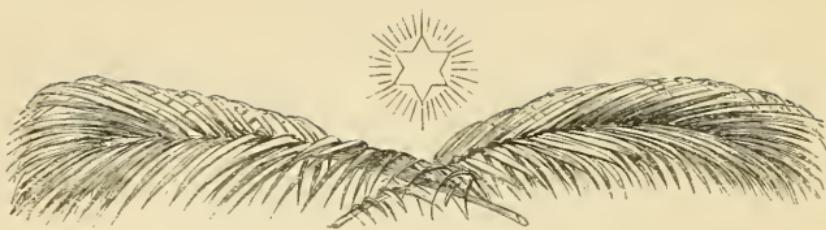
The one paramount reflection arising from these thoughts is surely this—How wondrous the love of God in not sparing His own, His only Son, but freely giving Him up to be a *curse* for us ! He, even *He*—could give no costlier proof of divine affection. Reader ! having given you the greater pledge, you may take it as a guarantee for the bestowment of all lesser blessings. When His providential dispensations at times seem baffling ; when there seems no bright light in the cloud, no mercy in His footstep ; when you are apt to say with Gideon, “If the Lord be with us, why has all this befallen us ?” revert to that cross—that mysterious smiting ! Let it hush every rebellious surmise. Did *He* wear that crown of thorns for

thee? Did *He* pour out His life's blood for *thee*? Did He become a CURSE for *thee*? And wilt thou murmur at aught proceeding from a *Father's* hands?

“ Yes ! Mourning one,—a thought like this
May well each faithless doubt remove ;
Take from all tears their bitterness,
That God is LOVE ! ”

“ YEA, IN THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS WILL I MAKE MY
REFUGE, UNTIL THESE CALAMITIES BE OVERPAST.”





XVI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it."
—Ps. xxxix. 9.

The Secret of Submission. NEVER was there a more sorrow-stricken Pilgrim than he who uttered these words.

He was “wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way”—a dethroned king; a fugitive, attired in sack-cloth, with his head muffled, his feet unsandalled, and more direful memories and trials crushing his soul, which no Israelite at Elim could have shared.

Yet he was not without his sheltering palm in this desert of tribulation. Under one of these he here reposes. When Shimei, the representative of the abandoned house of Saul, base of heart and foul of tongue, came forth and cursed him, hurling stones and dust on the outcast sovereign;—the faithful retainers of the King, stung to the quick with the reproaches of the miscreant, would willingly have crossed the gorge and silenced him with their swords.

‘Hush,’ says the humbled monarch, ‘listen not to these taunts. Hear as if you heard them not. This expulsion from my throne and kingdom is not man’s doing—the result of uncontrolled human passion or wayward caprice.

God has sent this “son of Belial” on his mission of insult. Let him curse on, for *the Lord* hath bidden him.’ And he weaves the reflections of the hour into one of the most touching and plaintive of his psalms.

Never, indeed, is David more worthy of admiration than in this time of adversity—never truly greater is this Cedar of God than when wrestling with the storm ! His keenness of temperament might have roused far other emotions. If he had been naturally reserved, stolid, phlegmatic, we should not have wondered to see him submitting passively to his fate. But with feelings so finely set—cut to the quick with the imputation of unmerited wrong (for “reproach,” he tells us, had “broken his heart”), could we have wondered, if, stung to madness—chafed like a lioness robbed of her whelps—we had witnessed uncontrollable irritation, some outburst of vehement rage, some vow of fierce revenge ? How different ! “I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because Thou didst it !” Nor let any say, the King of Israel was a veteran in trial, that his more sensitive feelings were now blunted, that he made a virtue of necessity, and submitted with cold stoical endurance to the stern fortunes of war. Nay ; we see the saint of God, the resigned believer—his soul even as a weaned child—remaining calm and unmoved like a rock in the midst of the surge, because cherishing the spirit of an older and kindred sufferer—whose very words, indeed, he himself on this occasion repeats—“It is the Lord ; let Him do what seemeth good unto Him” (1 Sam. iii. 18, and 2 Sam. xv. 26).

“*Thou didst it.*” Would that we were ever ready to endorse with these words all that befalls us ! That prop-

removed—"Thou didst it ;" that gourd withered—"Thou didst it ;" that lily gathered—"Thou didst it ;" that mysterious blight in my life-prospects—"Thou didst it !" Oh, to rise above the atheism of second causes—the reflections which, if not in vocal utterance, at least in inward thought, are thus often formulated—'If such and such had been done, my child would have been spared ; but for some untoward accident—some cruel misfortune—bright stars, now expunged from my firmament, would still have been lighting me with their radiance !' Or these reflections may take the still sadder form of surmises on the Divine faithfulness ; impugning the wisdom and righteousness of the Divine dealings. 'Where is the justice and judgment which are said to be the habitation of God's throne ?—where the mercy and truth which are said to go before His face ?'

In the case of David, some might be disposed to think there was room for such questionings and repinings. 'It is hard for me,' he himself might have felt and said, 'to encounter this sweeping blast in my old age. After a life of devotion to the God of Israel ; after seeking to discharge, even though with mournful shortcomings, my duties as His anointed servant, the King of His covenant people, and the minstrel of His Church—hard it is to have the harp snatched from my hand, or left hanging tuneless and mute in my Cedar-palace, and to be driven a wanderer on alien soil !' But no such reasoning escapes his lips. Of all the psalms he ever sung, this life-psalm was the grandest ;—when he pursues his mournful way, so humble, unselfish, generous, submissive—"not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing."

Let us seek to have such a heart in us in our afflictions. When the Almighty in a moment overturns our cherished

schemes, and sends us forth, ‘barefoot and weeping,’ across the mount of trial, be it ours to feel that all is ordered ; and to say, looking high above human instruments—O God ! here am I, do to me as seemeth good to Thee : take me, use me for Thy glory. I wish not to evade any cross. The lot may be a bitter one cast into the lap, “but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord !” If my cup be filled with unmerited blessings, “Thou didst it ;” if emptied and its fragments strewn on the ground, “Thou didst it.” Let the world speak of its accident or chance, but let mine be a nobler, truer philosophy—“*The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken.*”

Cherishing such a spirit, may we not add, that unlooked-for refreshments and solaces—palm-groves of comfort—will be vouchsafed to us in the very season and desert of our trial ? The aged King of Judah had such in his hour of adversity :—temporal refreshment (2 Sam. xvi. 14), and the better solace of generous and faithful friendships, destined long to survive the season of exile—crowning all with a safe return from beyond Jordan, and a triumphant entrance within the walls of his beloved Zion. So in the case of His tried people. For them, too, does He spread a table in the wilderness. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.” “I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys : I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water” (Isaiah xli. 18). Thus does He cause them to sing of mercy in the midst of judgment ; imparting, when they most need it, new and undreamt-of consolations—strength in the hour of weakness, succour in the hour of danger, friends in the hour of loneliness, sympathy, human and Divine, in the hour of sorrow. Above all, whatever be their wilderness experiences and wilderness trials, bringing

them at last, in safety, across the border-river to the Heavenly Zion—the New Jerusalem—where the wail of sadness, the dirge of crushed hopes and blighted or buried affections, shall never more be heard.

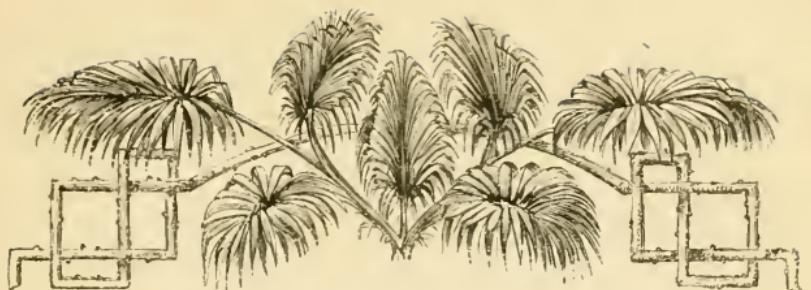
Oh! with this motto in all time of your tribulation, “*Thou didst it,*” trust a faithful, covenant-keeping God. Yes, trust Him—even when, like David, you may have the sackcloth on your loins and the tear in your eye—when you seem to be under the shadow, not of the green palm, but of the mournful cypress. “Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

“ Go not far from me, O my Strength,
Whom all my times obey;
The strongest prop on earth may fail,
But go not Thou away,—
And let the storm that does Thy work
Deal with me as it may.

“ Thy love has many a lighted path
No outward eye can trace;
And Thee my heart sees in the deep,
With darkness on its face,
And communes with Thee 'mid the storm
As in a secret place.

“ Safe in Thy sanctifying grace,
Almighty to restore,
Borne onward—sin and death behind,
And love and life before—
Oh, let my soul abound in hope,
And trust Thee more and more !”

“ THE LORD IS GOOD : A STRONGHOLD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE,
AND HE KNOWETH THEM THAT TRUST IN HIM.”



XVII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

*“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the
first-fruits of them that slept.”*

—I COR. xv. 20.

A Risen
Christ.

HERE we have the true Palm (*Phœnix*) spoken of in the Preface, which, when burnt down, springs fresh and beauteous from its ashes,

with more vigorous stem and more glorious fronds. On the monuments of the early Roman Christians, in the city of their sufferings and triumphs, well may the fresh-plumaged bird of immortality be seen perched on Him, who, as the Divine Heavenly Palm, has purchased for His people the gift of eternal life.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the pledge and guarantee of that of His people. Hence, the pre-eminent importance assigned by the inspired writers to this great sheet-anchor of the Church's faith. The glorious light indeed illuminating the tomb of the Saviour throws its radiations on almost every other doctrine of the Christian system. The believer's justification, regeneration, sanctification, resurrection, glorification—each has its halo of glory borrowed from that vacant sepulchre. “If Christ be not risen, then

is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the *Resurrection* of the Lord Jesus" (Acts iv. 33). Paul, to his cultured auditory on Mars' Hill, preached "Jesus and the *Resurrection*." "It is Christ," says he, "who died, YEA RATHER who is *risen again*" (Rom. viii. 34). In the concluding benediction of the priceless Epistle to the Hebrews, it is the Redeemer's Resurrection which is specially singled out as the mightiest of God's mighty acts, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." It was that Resurrection-hour for which Jesus Himself is represented as longing from all eternity, when pillow'd on the Father's bosom. Then He joyed "according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Isa. ix. 3). He seems to bound over intervening ages; and with His eye first on His own vacant tomb, and then on the myriads His Resurrection foreshadowed, He is represented as exclaiming—"I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be thy plagues! O Grave, I will be thy destruction!" (Hos. xiii. 14).

No wonder then that the Resurrection of Christ has been for the last 1800 years a joyful day,—that our Sabbaths are its solemn commemorations. We repeat, it was the truth of all truths among the primitive believers. It was not the day of His *death* they made their Sabbath, but the first day of the week;—the day when the sadness of the weeping women at the sepulchre was turned into gladness: and their watchword at meeting (the word of gratulation and welcome) was not "The Lord has *died*," but "The Lord has *risen*." It was with them a day of praise, more than for confession; for psalms of thanksgiving, more than for

penitential tears. Conscious that a new and nobler *Genesis* had dawned on a benighted world, they sung in responsive melody, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

The earnest of the outer material creation are welcome and joyful. If we hail with grateful spirit the first budding of early spring in grove and field, because in these we see the promise and pledge that soon nature will be arrayed in her full robes of resurrection beauty;—with what feelings ought we to stand by the sepulchre of our Lord, and see the buried Conqueror rising triumphant over the last enemy! Do we not behold in Him the harbinger of an immortal spring-time, or rather a glorious harvest, when the mounds of the earth, and the caves of the ocean, shall surrender what they have held for ages in sacred custody: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision;" when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," and the summons shall go forth, "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust." "Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming!"

Ye who have priceless treasures in the tomb, think of this! "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." True, that "house of our earthly tabernacle" at death, is a "darksome ruin." That dust is resolved into its kindred dust. The constituent elements of the dismantled framework are incorporated with new forms of matter. Sad and terrible is dissolution in all its accompaniments. We do not wish to strew that dismal path with flowers. Death, from the earthly view of it, is not irradiated by one gleam of sunshine. The slow and gradual wasting and decay, the fading of the bloom from the cheek, the languor of the eye, the wearisome days, the long night-vigils, the mind participating not unfrequently with the

wreck of the body, memory often a blank, the fondest look and the fondest name eliciting no response ! Then the close of all—the knocking at the mysterious gates of a mysterious future ;—the empty chamber, where “echo slumbers ;” the noiseless footfall, the mute crowd of mourners, the grave, the return to the silent dwelling, and the vacant seat :—O Death, truly *here* is thy sting ; O Grave, truly *here* is thy victory ! But the day is coming when all these memories of woe shall vanish, like the darkness before the morning sun :—when the spoil of plundering ages shall in a marvellous way be all restored ;—when, as in the Prophet’s Valley of Vision, bone shall come to bone, and sinew to sinew. The old loving smiles of earth will be seen again in the newly-glorified body, purged from all the dross and alloy of its old materialism :—the drooping withered flower reviving, beauteous and fragrant with the bloom of perennial summer. “Why weepest thou ?” was the question of the Risen Conqueror, as He gazed on a tearful eye at the Resurrection morn. The Christian’s grave need be watered by no tears ; for Jesus hath converted it into the vestibule of heaven. How different from the mournful legends to be seen and read at this hour on heathen Columbaria, as “to the final farewell” and “the eternal sleep !” How different from the inscriptions untombed in the latest Assyrian excavations in the mounds of Kalakh ; of which we are told—“In this temple were performed the mournings and lamentations for the yearly dying Tammuz the ‘Son of Life,’ whom Istar went annually to recover from the House of Death, the Palace of ‘*The Land of no return !*’”

The Christian searches, indeed, in vain, amid the ashes of Jerusalem’s desolation, for any material tomb of his Divine Lord. But if the tomb be lost in the wreck of ages,

the glorious, invisible inscription still remains—"Fear not : I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." And "because I live, ye shall live also!"

"Our loved ones in the narrow home we lay.
But while Death's sharp scythe is sweeping,
We remember 'mid our weeping
That a Father's hand is keeping
Every vernal bloom that falleth underneath its chilly sway.
And though earthly flowers may perish,
There are buds His hand will cherish,
Throughout the years eternal—these can never fade away."

"**MY FLESH ALSO SHALL REST IN HOPE : FOR THOU WILT NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HELL ; NEITHER WILT THOU SUFFER THINE HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.**
THOU WILT SHED ME THE PATH OF LIFE : IN THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY ; AT THY RIGHT HAND THERE ARE PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE."





XVIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
. . . For He is our God; and we are the people of His pas-
ture, and the sheep of His hand."*

—Ps. xcvi. 3, 7.

The Creator
and Redeemer.

THE contemplation of God in all His varied attributes may well form a theme of refreshment to His people in every stage of the wilderness journey. Such a contemplation is presented in these conjoined verses—the majesty and omnipotence of the Jehovah-Lord, in combination with the tenderness and grace of the Covenant-Shepherd.

Although composed at a much later date, the greater portion of the psalm might have been sung by the pilgrim Hebrews as they were encamped under the grove of Elim. A glance over the contents will show how desert symbols and memories colour and tinge its phraseology. But it is a song suited for God's spiritual Israel in all ages, both collectively and individually.

• After a triumphal prelude or introduction, the psalm divides itself into two parts. The *first* is a summons by His people to join in this ascription of praise to "the Rock

of Salvation ;” the second is the utterance or response of God Himself—an earnest and solemn appeal to hear His voice and accept His salvation. It is of the first of these alone we shall now speak.

Two specific grounds or reasons are given for thus “coming before His presence with thanksgiving, and making a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms.”

(1) Because He is CREATOR. (v. 3) “For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth ; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it ; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down ; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker !”

The Psalmist here makes all material nature around him a temple resonant with praise to its Almighty Framer. And we may imagine what a gorgeous shrine the land of Palestine must have been : not as now, cursed and blighted with barrenness, but as it was, with its mountains and vineyards and oliveyards :—its gorges (“the deep places of the earth,” perhaps referring to the singular depression in the course of its one illustrious river):—the sea bordering its western frontier ;—its happy villages, climbing to the very tops of the wooded hills—the pastures clothed with flocks—the valleys, also, covered over with corn ! It is the God of this Temple whose glory he proclaims—He who gave strength to these mountains, and grandeur to “that great and wide sea in which are things creeping innumerable.”

Not only does he celebrate (v. 3) Jehovah as a great Lord, but as a great “King above all (the heathen) gods.” In the mythologies of Greece and Rome, a god was assigned to every department of nature—such as Neptune, Pluto, Æolus, and others, gods of sea and fire and wind and mountain, rain and thunder and forked lightning. This

great King embraced in His one mighty and potent hand all these diverse agencies and elements. He was not the God of “the deep places” only, but He was the God of the hills ; their strength was “His also.” His hands not only fashioned the dry land, but these hands built the rocky caverns of old ocean—“The sea is His;” He “covered it with the deep as with a garment.” In the words of the challenge of another sacred singer of Israel—“Who (like Him) hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” (Is. xl. 12).

“ God’s world is bathed in beauty,
God’s world is steeped in light ;
It is the self-same glory
That makes the day so bright,
Which thrills the earth with music,
Or hangs the stars in night.”

(2) The second ground or reason which the Psalmist gives for his appeal to worship God with thanksgiving and joyful melody is, because He is REDEEMER. This is contained in our second motto-verse (v. 7), where Jehovah is brought before us in His Shepherd character and relation to His people as THEIR God, their Covenant God—“For He is our God ; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” If the old wilderness of Sinai, as seen from the Elim palms, with its masses and munitions of gigantic rock, furnished the future Hebrew minstrels and chroniclers with the favourite and most expressive symbol of Divine power and unchangeableness, Palestine itself, in its grassy hills and sheep-walks, contributed the more endearing emblem for the covenant relation subsisting

between God and His people—" *The Lord is my SHEPHERD, I shall not want.* He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters ;" or, as here, " We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

If we be called on to praise and adore 'God our *Rock*' for His natural attributes of power, greatness, wisdom, immutability, how far louder and loftier ought the strains of that song to rise to Him who is "the Rock of our salvation"—who tends the " Israel within Israel," the true people of His covenant fold, with all the watchful affection which the Oriental shepherd is known to lavish on his fleecy charge ;—protecting them amid summer's drought and winter's cold, from the lurking wild beast and the human plunderer, and risking his own life in their defence ! He who, in the glorious concave of the nightly heavens, as the great Shepherd of the universe, is sublimely spoken of as keeping watch over fold on fold of stars—" golden-fleeced sheep"—" calling them all by their names," has the very same words applied by Divine lips to His spiritual Israel, the flock of His spiritual pasture : " He calleth His own sheep by *name*, and leadeth them out" (John x. 3).

Can we take up the higher note of this anthem ? The deist can sing the first—adoring God as the Creator, who made sky, air, earth, and heaven ; but can we stand under the shelter of the Heavenly Palm and raise the loftier ascription—" He is *our God*, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hands "? The God of *nature* ! Noble, indeed, are the themes and illustrations which that name suggests—the manifested glory of " The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords !" The thunder is His voice ; the clouds are the dust of His feet ; He walketh upon the wings of the wind ;

His pavilion round about Him are dark waters and thick clouds of the sky :—at one and the same moment tracing out the pathway for sun and star, and yet painting the green of moss and lichen, and imprinting the varied tints on the petals of every flower. But, God of *grace* ! “The Shepherd of the stone of Israel”—this “new, best name”—speaks of *forgiveness*. It unfolds to us not only the Rock in its giant majesty, defying the fury of the desert simoom, but it discloses to us fissures in that Rock—blessed crevices—taking shelter in which, the breath of sirocco and storm pass by us unscathed ! “We are the people of His pasture.” It tells of shepherd love and shepherd tenderness. Every nook of the mountain, every grassy knoll—ay, too, and every bleak corner of these pasture-grounds—are known to Him ! What more than this can we desire?—pardon, peace, guidance, direction, support, grace, glory ! As an old writer quaintly says, “He leads us in, He leads us through, He leads us on, He leads us up, He leads us *home* !”

Let the sweet music of this psalm quicken our footsteps through every wilderness experience, till the same Divine Shepherd shall conduct us to the heavenly Elim, by the living fountains of waters, in the pastures of the Blessed !

“ Seek farther, farther yet, O dove !
 Beyond the land, beyond the sea,
 There shall be rest for thee and me,
 For thee and me and those I love.

“ I heard a promise gently fall,
 I heard a far-off Shepherd call
 The weary and the broken-hearted,
 Promising rest unto each and all.”

“ THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST FOR THE PEOPLE
 OF GOD.”



XIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He loved me and gave Himself for me."

—GAL. ii. 20.

Proof and Triumph of Love.

TRAVELLERS tell us that it is those palm trees whose stems have been broken by the sweep of the tempest which are generally seen to shoot forth the largest and most sheltering branches. The "corn of wheat" in the divine parable, by falling into the ground and dying, brought forth "much fruit." So is it from the death of Jesus that the new and glorious life of God's people is derived—"I came that they might have life, and that *they might have it more abundantly.*"

Reader, are you able fully to accept and appropriate this sublime verity? to view it, not as a beautiful figure, a typical fiction, but as a sober reality. "He loved me, and gave Himself *FOR me;*" that He surrendered His life's blood, in order to have the right to say, as He beckons under the shelter of the Elim palm-grove, "Come unto Me, and I will give you *rest.*"

In obeying the gracious invitation, rejoice, too, that the negotiation is completed, the Substitute has been provided, the ransom *has* been paid. It is not a matter which now

remains in suspense and unaccomplished. Many on earth have noble and lofty intentions which have never been fulfilled. Many a high emprise has been excogitated ; but the enthusiasm wears past, the opportunity is lost, or the resolve is strangled at the birth. Not so this Great Salvation. What Christ undertook He has performed. He does not utter the unavailing soliloquy and lament in His heavenly palace, over an apostate world, which David did on the occasion of the death of his ruined child, "Would God I had died for thee." He *has* died ; He *has* fulfilled His covenant-pledge as our Surety. Our mortgaged inheritance *has* been recovered. The prophetic words have become now the utterance of an historic fact,—He **HAS** seen of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied !

Well do we know that this doctrine is in these modern times disliked by many ; by not a few rejected. Many prefer coming with Cain's bloodless offerings of thanksgiving (the deist sacrifice) rather than, like Abel, bringing the bleating victim from his fold. They are willing to behold Christ the Son ; not Christ the "Lamb of God." They build the temple whilst they disown the altar. But it is not the philosophic divinity which consists in the apotheosis of virtue—it is not eliminating these peculiar doctrines of the cross, and substituting cold negations that will pacify conscience. The most familiar of lines embody, in simple language, the alone Scripture creed—the alone accepted and acceptable 'Song of the pardoned' :—

" When from the dust of death I rise
To take my mansion in the skies,
This all my hope, this all my plea,
That Jesus lived and died for me."

Let that which will form your only stable and satisfying trust then, be the ground of your hope and confidence now.

Accept Him, unhesitatingly, as your Surety-Saviour, “the end of the law for righteousness.” “Jacob,” says old Thomas Brooks, “got the blessing in the garment of his elder brother, so in the garment of Christ’s righteousness, who is our Elder Brother, we obtain the blessing, yea, all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.” See how He has “blotted out the handwriting that was against you, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross !” See how God, the injured Creditor, has cancelled your obligations ! Never again, in point of law, can your legion-sins appear ;—they are obliterated for ever. “I will be merciful,” says He (what man often is not), “to your unrighteousness :—your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. viii. 12). Let the mightiest angel in heaven be delegated to go in quest of these ! Let him roam creation ! Let him search every corner of the earth, and every cavern of the ocean. He will come back from the mission with the tidings—“The iniquity of Israel is sought for, and there is none ; and the sins of Judah, and they are not found.” He is faithful that promised—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins ” (Isa. xliv. 22).

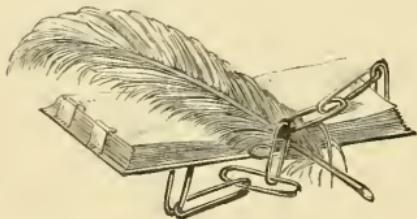
We may appropriately conclude with the simple words of an old hymn-writer of the Fatherland (*Angelus*, 1657) :—

“ Thou Holiest Love ! whom most I prize,
Who art my longed-for, only bliss,
Who left the glory of the skies
To tread earth’s desert wilderness :—

Who once did suffer in my stead,
To cancel debt I could not pay :
Whose blood upon the cross was shed
To take the world’s great guilt away :—

I give Thee thanks that Thou didst die
To win eternal life for me ;
Oh bring that great salvation nigh,
And draw me up in love to Thee ! ”

“ THEREFORE, BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE
WITH GOD, THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”





XX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt
know hereafter."*

—JOHN xiii. 7.

Future Unfoldings. A GRACIOUS ‘whisper’ into the ear of an ardent and loving but impetuous apostle, from Him who was - Himself the Heavenly Palm. An assurance well calculated to allay needless disquietude ; and impart confidence, trust, and strength to His people, at all times, and under all circumstances.

We have only a partial view here of God’s dealings, His half-completed, half-developed plan ; but all will stand out in fair and graceful proportions in the great finished Temple of Eternity !

Go, in the reign of Israel’s greatest King, to the heights of Lebanon. See that noble Cedar, the pride of its compeers, an old wrestler with northern blasts ! Summer loves to smile upon it—night spangles its feathery foliage with dewdrops—the birds nestle on its branches, the weary pilgrim, or wandering shepherd repose under its shadow from the midday heat or from the furious storm ; but, all at once, it is marked out to fall ! The aged denizen of the

forest is doomed to succumb to the woodman's stroke ! As we see the axe making its first gash on its gnarled trunk, then the noble limbs stripped of their branches, and at last the "Tree of God," as was its distinctive epithet, coming with a crash to the ground, we exclaim against the wanton destruction, the demolition of this proud pillar in the temple of nature. We are tempted to cry with the prophet, as if inviting the sympathy of every lowlier stem,— invoking inanimate things to resent the affront—" *Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar has fallen !*" - But wait a little. Follow that gigantic trunk as the workmen of Hiram launch it down the mountain side ; thence conveyed in rafts along the blue waters of the Mediterranean ; and last of all, behold it set a glorious polished beam in the Temple of God. As you see its destination, placed in the very Holy of Holies, in the diadem of the Great King ;—say, can you grudge that 'the crown of Lebanon' was despoiled, in order that this jewel might have so noble a setting ? That cedar stood as a stately prop in *Nature's* sanctuary, but 'the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former !'

How many of our souls are like these cedars of old ! God's axes of trial have stripped and bared them. We see no reason for dealings so dark and mysterious. But He has a noble end and object in view; to set them as everlasting pillars and rafters in His Heavenly Zion ; to make them "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God."

Jehovah, had He seen meet, might, by miracle or otherwise, have studded the march of the Israelites all the way to Canaan with Elim groves. At each fresh encampment, as the guiding cloud gave the sign of rest, an extemporised oasis, fringed with palms and musical with fountains, might

have risen in the midst of the barren sands. The beautiful promise of the evangelical prophet might have had a literal fulfilment,—“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing ; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon” (*Isa. xxxv. 12*). We know how different was their experience ! Take one of the many similar entries in the inspired record—“And the children of Isrâel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai ; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran” (*Num. x. 12*). Their route lay through barren wastes and waterless wadys and under brazen skies ;—the way infested with serpents and scorpions, their steps tracked by predatory tribes. So also in the case of His people still. Had He seen meet He might have ordained that their pathway was to be without gloom or darkness, trial or tear ; no cross, no “deep calling to deep,” nothing but seas unfretted by a ripple, sunny slopes and verdant valleys, and bright clusters of palm, with sunlit fronds of love and faithfulness ! But to keep them humble, to teach them their dependence on Himself, to make their present existence a state of discipline and probation, He has ordered it otherwise. Their journey, as travellers, is at times through mist and cloudland. Their voyage, as seamen, through alternate calm and storm. They are like the vessel building in the dockyard. The unskilled and uninitiated can hear nothing but clanging hammers ; they can see nothing but unshapely timbers and glare of torches. It is a scene of din and noise, dust and confusion. But all will at last be acknowledged as needed portions in the spiritual workmanship, when the soul, released from its earthly fastenings, is launched on the summer seas of eternity.

“ Give to the winds thy fears ;
 Hope, and be undismayed ;
 God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
 God shall lift up thy head.
 Through waves and clouds and storms
 He gently clears thy way :
 Wait thou His time—so shall this night
 Soon end in joyous day !”

“ Then shall we know,” to use the words of an earnest thinker, “ that the dark scenes were dark with light too bright for mortal eye ; the sorrow turning into dearest joys when seen to be the filling up of Christ’s ; who withholds not from us His own crown, bidding us drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism ; and saying to our reluctant hearts, ‘ What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter ’ ” (Life of Hinton, p. 186).

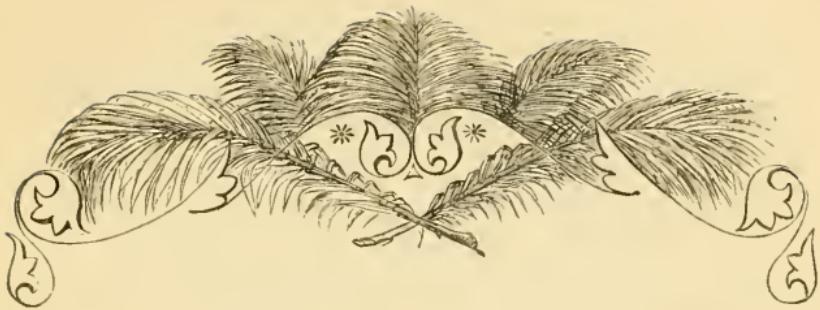
“ I do not ask, O Lord, that life may be
 A pleasant road ;
 I do not ask that Thou wouldest take from me
 Aught of its load.

“ I do not ask that flowers should always spring
 Beneath my feet ;
 I know too well the poison and the sting
 Of things too sweet.

“ For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead,
 Lead me aright—
 Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed,
 Through peace to light.

“ I do not ask my cross to understand,
 My way to see—
 Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
 And follow Thee.”

“ BUT IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT AT EVENING TIME IT
 SHALL BE LIGHT.”



XXI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“Christ, the power of God.”

—*1 COR. i. 24.*

*“The Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto
salvation.”*

—*ROM. i. 16.*

A Great
Salvation.

In the sense of a great national deliverance, the Israelites at Elim had lately, as we have seen, been the spectators of “the power of God unto salvation.” By Him “both the chariot and the horse had been cast into the sea,” and He had “made a way through its depths for His ransomed to pass over.”

Stupendous as that miracle was, there was one mightier far, of which the other was the emblem. Fifteen centuries after these liberated Hebrews were slumbering in their graves, the Gospel of Christ was made known as this supreme, incomparable spiritual ‘power’—“*the power of God*” (or, omitting the article, which is not in the original, “*power of God*”—God’s own instrumental means of saving men).

Of what may be called the dominant world-power we have reason to be “ashamed”;—the power of brute

force—the monster-power of war—the power associated with Paganism and the savage ages. Let us confront the demon-power with the angel-power—the power which has been earth's greatest curse, with the power which has proved earth's greatest blessing—the power of guilty man to destruction, with the power of Almighty God “unto salvation.” Without that Gospel of Christ, the world had not one ray of light on the subject of salvation, either from the guilt or the dominion of sin. Oratory, poetry, philosophy, taste, intellect, reason, were all baffled and confounded ; professing themselves on this great mystery to be wise, they became fools. Mankind had tried for ages and generations to solve the problem ; but every oracle was dumb on the great question, “What must I do to be saved ?” The Greek might discourse on the loveliness of nature—he might speak of the theology of mountains and groves and forests and rivers : and we have no wish to depreciate their testimony. St. Paul had none. He, surely, was feelingly alive to the glories of nature's scenery, who, on Mars Hill, could, to the Athenians, so sublimely discourse on “God who made the world and all things therein, who dwelleth not in temples” (such temples as these !—pointing up to their adjoining Parthenon), “made with hands” (Acts xvii. 24) ; or to the Lystrians, as he spake of “the living God, who made heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein ; who giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and with gladness” (Acts xiv. 17). But listen, ye Greeks ! Pile, if you will, mountain on mountain ; ransack all the glories of material nature ; bring every flower that blooms, and every torrent that sweeps in wild music to the sea ; summon old ocean from his deep caverns, and the myriad stars that gem the firmament !

They may, and do, silently and eloquently, speak on the theme of God's "eternal power and Godhead." But there is *one* theme on which "they have no speech nor language —their voice is not heard," and that is, *How is God to deal with my sinful soul?* With regard to this question, "You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

Is there, then, no answer elsewhere? Yes, where the volume of Nature fails, the volume of Inspiration interposes. The question *is* answered. The Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation ;" or, as it is expressed in the kindred passage, "Christ crucified is the power of God !" He is the Power of God to atone for sin. He is the Power of God to satisfy justice, and meet the requirements of the law. He is the Power of God to rob death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. We hear much of the bygone power of man. The Nile, the Euphrates, the Tiber, are washing, to this hour, the colossal memorials of that power. His sovereignty, too, in these later days, over the elements, is a mighty thing—his making the winged lightning his ambassador, annihilating space, converting the world into a vast whispering-gallery—tidings from battle-fields, or secrets in which the fate of empires and centuries are suspended, transmitted by a magic touch from capital to capital ;—the power of steam, too, like a fiery spirit, careering majestically over land and ocean. But what is his power when brought to bear on the soul, and the sinner, and eternity? A voice is heard saying of, and to, all human might—"Thus far shalt thou go, and no further : here let thy proud waves be stayed." The world, we repeat, had given it long eras to work out, if it could, the problem of its own self-restoration. But after these centuries of failure ; after God had given man his own time and means to exhaust every effort to save himself, He says—' Now, listen to My own Divine

expedient : By lifting up My beloved Son on the cross, I intend to draw all men unto Me !’ Verily here is a new power—“a new thing” on the earth. The world is to be conquered ; society is to be remoulded ; time-honoured religions are to be overthrown ; Pantheons are to be subverted—ay, better than all, souls are to be saved, by the power of a silent transforming principle. “The battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.”

Ah ! there is no power—no influence that can unloose the fetters of fallen humanity like this ! We are reminded of the maniac of old who dwelt among the tombs. No *man* could bind him. They had tried it ; but he had burst their ligaments like tow, and roamed that dark graveyard. At last he spied, on the white strand of Gennesaret, ONE of whom he had heard. It was *Jesus* ! See him now, sitting “clothed, and in his right mind.” So with the soul still. There are many who, in the mad fever of their passions, have roamed for years amid the place of the dead, “crying and cutting themselves with stones.” But the Divine Redeemer, in the glories of His person—in the completeness of His work—has stood before them. Unreclaimable, untamable, by all human means, they have taken a child’s place at the foot of His cross ; and there they now are sitting, with the peace of Heaven mirrored in their hearts—“the joy of the Lord their strength.”

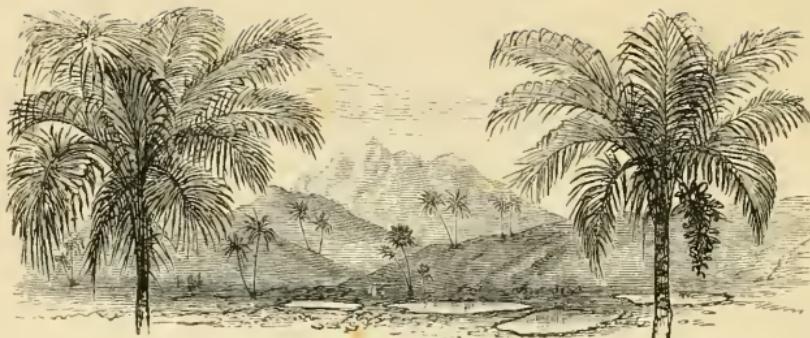
“ See me, see me, once a rebel,
Prostrate at His cross I lie—
Cross, to tame earth’s proudest able,
Who was e’er so proud as I ?
He convinced me, He subdued me,
He chastised me, He renewed me :

The nails that pierced, the spear that slew Him,
Transfixed my heart, and bound me to Him.

See me ! see me ! once a rebel,
Prostrate at His cross I lie."

" LET US LABOUR THEREFORE TO ENTER INTO THAT
REST."





XXII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death."

—REV. i. 17, 18.

Fears quieted. OR, "I am the Living ONE." John's loving Lord had been lost from sight, ever since the hour when He was borne upwards to heaven from the heights of Olivet. How the orphaned Apostle must have mourned over the irreparable blank ! How oft in thought would he retraverse these days of earth's holiest and most sacred friendship—when he had walked by his Lord's side, or leaned on His bosom, or listened to His words of divinest comfort ! How often may he not have breathed the fond wish, in words which have enshrined themselves in many a bereft heart—

*"Oh, for the touch of a vanished Hand,
And the sound of a Voice that is still!"*

And yet he would remember, too, the Christ of Nazareth and Galilee is no longer the lowly Man of sorrows, the Pilgrim of pilgrims. He is exalted in heavenly state—a name is given Him which is above every name ! When,

therefore, he had the first startling intimation of the Divine apparition in Patmos ; when he heard the trumpet heralding his Lord's approach, saw the bright blaze of glory projected from His path, and listened to the announcement in whose presence he was—"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"—he might have expected, on turning round, to gaze on some dazzling throne, gleaming with coruscations of Truth, and Holiness, and Righteousness—tiers of attendant angels and burning seraphim lining the celestial pathway ! How different ! He first sees a vision, and then hears a voice. Both are replete with comfort and consolation, and well fitted to dismiss and dispel all fear. The *vision*—It is the Lord holding a cluster of stars in His hand, and encircled with seven golden candlesticks ; in gracious love moving in the midst of the Church militant ; feeding each candlestick with the oil of His grace, and keeping every star in its sphere in the firmament. The *voice*—The vanished hand *does* touch, the stilled voice *is* once more heard : "He laid His right hand upon me, and said, Fear not." It would recall to Him that memorable morning descent, after the night of seraphic bliss on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the heavenly messengers had come and gone, and he and his companion-Apostles were returning back to the dull world again. "Alone!"—"yet not alone!" "When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save *Jesus only*." Bereft they were of their celestial companions ; but they had *One* compensating solace for all they had lost. The stars and satellites and moons had waxed and waned and departed—the taper-lights had been extinguished ; but the great Sun still remained to illuminate their path, and perpetuate the bliss of that glorious Sabbath hour. It was enough—they asked no more. With His love and presence to cheer them, they pursued their

path, ready for duty, for trial, for suffering—animated by the sight of the crown, they descended more willing to bear the cross. So would it be now, in Patmos, as on Hermon.

We have, in this exquisitely tender dealing with John, an assurance of what Jesus is still. First, to His Church universal :—“in the midst of it”—keeping the oil from decaying, and the gold from tarnishing, and the stars from starting from their orbits. Then, also, what He is willing to be to every individual believer—the poorest, the humblest, the meanest, the most obscure—though his heart be a Patmos, lonely and desolate, and his home a desert rock, or a dungeon of captivity, or a hut of poverty, or a chamber of disease, or a bed of death :—*there* He is, to lay His right hand of love on the trembling one, and say, “FEAR NOT!” *Fear not*, thou poor sinner, trembling under the load of thy guilt—‘I am He that was dead ;’ My death is thy life, My blood thy plea, My cross the passport to thy crown. *Fear not*, thou weak and faint-hearted, borne down under thy corruptions, the strength of thy temptations, the weakness of thy graces, the lukewarmness of thy love—“I am alive for evermore ;” My grace will be sufficient for thee. *Fear not*, suffering one :—thou art contending with a great fight of afflictions ; trial after trial, like wave after wave, has been rolling in upon thee ; thy house hath been swept, ties have been broken, graves opened—the tear scarce dry when made to flow again. *Fear not!* I have “the keys of the grave and of death.” Not one deathbed has been ordered, not one grave dug, not one tear permitted, without My bidding. Art thou not satisfied when a Living Redeemer has the Keys of Death suspended from His girdle. In whose keeping could they be better than in His? Art thou afraid to die? Is the thought of death, of thy coming dis-

solution, fearful to thee? “*Fear not! I was dead!*” I have sanctified that grave and that dark valley by traversing it all before thee. I am the abolisher of death; and to all my people I have made the gate of Death and the gate of Heaven one!

JESUS LIVETH:—what a motto and watchword for *us*! Many of the most loving and beloved of human friends come only, like Moses and Elias on the mount of which we have spoken, upon angel visits—illuminating the night of earth with a transient yet blessed radiance—then leaving us, like the disciples, amid the chill, gray mists of solitude—our path moist with dewy tears, as we hurry back once more to a cold, unsympathising world. But blessed antidote to all cares! blessed balm for all wounds! blessed compensation for all losses! blessed solace in all sorrows! —if we can descend from the mountain-heights of worldly bliss to the deepest valleys of humiliation and trial with Him still at our side. *Jesus liveth!*—the Living among the dead—Faithful among the faithless—Changeless among the changeable—the only unfailing, unvarying Friend in a failing, varying world. *Jesus liveth!* Then when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory. Like John, we will fall down at His feet and exclaim, “THIS GOD SHALL BE OUR GOD FOR EVER AND EVER!”

“ I love to hear that voice of old
Which over Patmos’ rocky shore
Thus sweetly spake, ‘ I live ; behold,
I am alive for evermore ! ’

“ ‘ My Saviour lives ! ’—no mortal ears
Can listen to more joyous strains ;
High above yonder rolling spheres
My God, and yet my Brother, reigns.

“ ‘ My Saviour lives ! ’ He intercedes
 Still as the Lamb—the Crucified ;
 ‘ Father, I WILL ’—’tis thus He pleads—
 Ne’er was the boon He asked denied.

“ ‘ My Saviour lives ! ’—and still His heart
 Responsive beats upon the throne
 To every pang from which I smart ;
 He makes my tears and woes His own.

“ ‘ My Saviour lives ! ’—to see His face
 My endless happiness will be ;
 Lord, independent of all place,
 Where’er Thou art is Heaven to me ! ”

“ YE NOW THEREFORE HAVE SORROW ; BUT I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN, AND YOUR HEART SHALL REJOICE, AND YOUR JOY NO MAN TAKETH FROM YOU.”





XXIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“He knoweth the way that I take.”

—JOB xxiii. 10.

The Way
known.

THE shadow of a palm of blessed consolation and comfort, under which sat the old Emir of Arabia.

The Book of Job has been well defined to be “the record of an earnest soul’s perplexities, where the double difficulty of life is solved, the existence of moral evil, and the question whether suffering is a mark of wrath or not. What falls from Job’s lips is the musing of a man half-stunned, half-surprised, looking out upon the darkness of life, and asking sorrowfully, Why are these things so?” In his chequered experience he loses at times the footsteps of a God of love. Through anguished tears he gives utterance to his soul-trouble, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.” “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him” (Job xxiii. 8, 9).

But though to sense and sight all is dark, faith rises to

the ascendant, and, piercing the environing cloud, her voice is heard, “*But He knoweth the way that I take.*” All that Providential drama is arranged by Him : life, with all its lights and shadows, its joys and its sorrows. It is enough for the sufferer to be assured that his path and lot are not the result of wayward and capricious accident. The furnace (to take the new figure employed in the same verse) is lighted by the God whose hand was for the moment hidden ; and that same faith can add, “*When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*”

Believer ! what a glorious assurance ! This way of thine—this, it may be crooked, mysterious, tangled way—this way of trial and of tears, “*the way of the wilderness*”—“*He knoweth it.*” The furnace, seven times heated—He lighted it. Oh ! how would every sorrow and loss be aggravated and embittered if we had nothing to cling to but the theory of arbitrary appointment and dreary fatalism ! But we may take courage. There is an Almighty Guide knowing and directing our footsteps, whether it be to the bitter Marah pool, or to the joy and refreshment of Elim. That way, dark to the Egyptians, has its pillar of cloud and fire for His own Israel. The furnace is hot ; but not only can we trust the hand that kindles it, but we have the assurance that the fires are lighted not to consume, but to refine ; and that when the fining process is completed (no sooner—no later), He brings His people forth as gold. When they think Him least near, He is often nearest. “*When my spirit was overwhelmed, then Thou knewest my path.*”

Can we realise these truths in our every day experience ? Can we think of God, not as some mysterious essence, who, by an Almighty fiat, impressed on matter certain general laws, and, retiring into the solitude of His being, left

these to work out their own processes: but is there joy to us in the thought of His being ever nigh; compassing our path and our lying down? Do we know of ONE brighter than the brightest radiance of the visible sun, visiting our chamber with the first waking beam of the morning: an eye of infinite tenderness and compassion following us throughout the day, "knowing the way that we take;" a hand of infinite love guiding us, shielding us from danger, and guarding us from temptation—"The keeper of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps?" Ay, too, and when the furnace is lighted, seeing HIM not only kindling it, but seated by, as "the refiner of silver," tempering the fury of the flames? The world, in their cold vocabulary in the hour of adversity, speak of "*Providence*"—"the will of *Providence*"—"the strokes of *Providence*." PROVIDENCE! what is that? Why dethrone a living, directing God from the sovereignty of His own earth? Why substitute an inanimate, deathlike abstraction, in place of an acting, controlling, Personal Jehovah? Why forbid the Angel of bereavement to point his hand up the golden steps of "the misty stair," to "the God above the ladder," saying, "Our Father on high hath done it!"? How it would take the sting from many a goading trial, thus to see, what the same patriarch saw, (in his hour of aggravated woe, when every earthly Elim-palm lay prostrate at his feet with stripped and withered branches)—no hand but the Divine. He saw that hand behind the gleaming swords of the Sabeans—he saw it behind the lightning-flash—he saw it giving wings to the careering tempest—he saw it in the awful silence of his rifled home—"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Thus seeing God in everything, his faith reached its climax when this once-powerful prince of the desert, seated on his bed of

ashes, could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!"

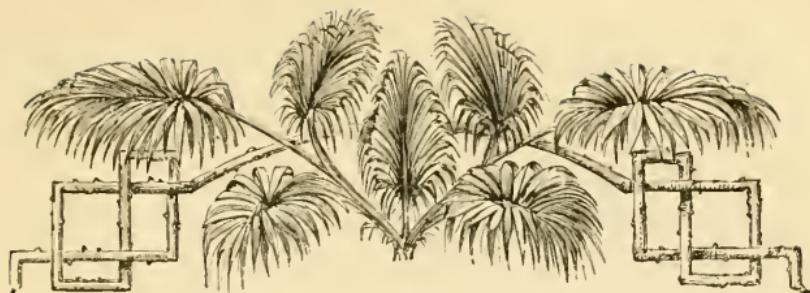
We joyfully believe the day is coming when we shall write under every mystic providence, "He hath done all things well." Yes, bereaved ones, ye shall no more weep over early graves, when ye yourselves pass upwards to the realms of glory, and hear from the loved and glorified as they are waiting to greet you at the door of heaven, that by an early death they were "taken away from the evil to come." Meanwhile let us rejoice in the assurance, that "*the Lord reigneth;*" that He knoweth and appointeth "the way" both for ourselves and for others. Oh, comforting thought! enough to dry all tears and silence all murmurings—"Is there evil in the city," in the cottage, in the palace,—is there evil which blights some unknown poor man's dwelling—is there evil which clothes a nation in mourning, "*and the Lord hath not done it?*"

" If all things work together
For ends so grand and blest,
What need to wonder, whether
Each in itself is blest ?

" If some things were omitted
Or altered as we would,
The whole might be unfitted
To work for perfect good.

" Our plans may be disjointed,
But we may calmly rest ;
What God has once appointed,
Is better than our best."

"SHEW ME THY WAYS, O LORD; TEACH ME THY PATHS."



XXIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Effectual fervent prayer."

—JAMES V. 16.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

—MATT. vii. 11.

Prayer. THERE is reposed rest beyond all other at the mercy-seat. When the hurricane of temptation and trial—the simoom-blast of the wilderness is fiercest—who has not felt the peaceful overshadowing of this Elim palm?

Prayer for *ourselves*, the unburdening the heart of its sins and sorrows into the ear of our Heavenly Father ; unbosoming our wants, our weaknesses, our frailties and back-slidings ; it may be the crimson and scarlet stains of which none but the Heart-searcher is cognisant. The cry for "more grace ;" realising our own weakness, yet realising, too, the strong arm on which we are encouraged to lean, when our temporary Elims must be left, and the buffeting storm of the wilderness and the unknown perils of the renewed journey must be faced !

Prayer for *others*. Delightful it is to feel that our inter-

cessions fetch down blessings on the absent. Prayer annihilates space ; it knows nothing of distance. That friend, that brother, the companion of your youth, is far separated from you,—out on the perilous ocean, away in the distant colony. The sound of the Sabbath-bell falls no more on his ear ; you can go with him no longer to the house of God in company ; his place is vacant in the pew ; his chair is empty at the table ; his voice is missed at the home-hearth ! But you *can* be present with him. Prayer can bring you to his side. Prayer can whisper a father's benediction over him. Prayer can sprinkle him with better than a mother's tears. Prayer can fetch the angels of God around him as a guard ; his shield in danger, his defence in trouble. Far off in her cottage-home, a thousand miles away, a mother, all unconscious at the moment of the danger of her sailor-boy, is uttering her midnight pleadings for the wanderer. They have ascended at the very crisis of destruction. The cry of the trembling form kneeling by her lonely couch has rocked the waves to rest. It is a mother's "effectual fervent prayers" that have turned the storm into a calm !

Prayer is still the golden key by which we can unlock, alike for ourselves and for others, the treasury of heaven, and "move the arm of Omnipotence." Yes, and what we owe, on the other hand, to the prayers which have hovered over our cradles and our early years, followed us into the world, grappling for us in our strong temptations, and which, like Jacob wrestling with the angel, have prevailed, will never be known until that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed !

Gracious indeed is this Palm-tree ; to be under its shelter is to be beneath the shadow of God. As the devout Payson expresses it, using a different simile, "The best means of

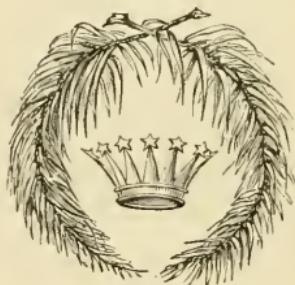
keeping near the Lord is the closet. Here the battle is lost or won."

What an encouragement to prayer is the divine challenge given in the second of our motto-verses ; the earthly father yielding to the requests and importunities of his children—the pledge and guarantee of a still greater willingness on the part of the Heavenly Parent to respond, and that too with a royal plenitude to our wants ! “ How much *more?* ” Never let us suppose that God is unwilling to hear. There is no exhausting that infinite fulness treasured up in Him. It is one of Philip Henry’s quaint sayings, “ When Abraham interceded for Sodom, God granted as long as he asked, Abraham left off first.” He is able to do “ exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” ‘ It is said,’ observes the saintly Rutherford, “ “ He answered not a word.” But it is not said, “ He *heard* not a word.” These two differ much. Christ often heareth, when He doth not answer. His not answering is an answer and speaks thus, “ Pray on, go on, and cry ; for the Lord holdeth His door fast bolted, not to keep you out, but that you may knock and knock.” Can we doubt either His willingness or ability to hear, when we think of Him who is our Advocate with the Father ?—the Angel Intercessor with His censer “ full of much incense,” sprinkling therewith the polluted and unworthy prayers of His people, and causing them to ascend with acceptance before God ? “ Ask in My name,” says that Divine Intercessor Himself ; adding, “ And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you.” What means He by this asserted suspension or intermission of His pleadings ? Simply, because the utterance of His *name* is sufficient. It is the passport to the Mercy-seat, the Key which unlocks the Treasury of heaven, and obtains the “ how much *more?* ” from the Father’s heart !

“Thou hast prayed for much
In the time that's past,
Thou must still pray on,
For thy wants come fast ;
Now ask what ye will
From His boundless store,
The Father is able
To give ‘much more.’”

“Hold out the empty hand,
And He will fill it ;
Tell Him Thy vexing fear,
And He will still it.
Now take what ye will
From His boundless store,
The Father is willing
To give ‘much more.’”

“VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WHATSOEVER YE SHALL ASK
THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE WILL GIVE IT YOU.”





XXV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs
with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently
lead those that are with young."

—ISA. lx. ii.

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He
not quench."

—ISA. xlvi. 3.

Tender Dealings. THE thoughts most prominently brought before us in these two passages from the Evangelical Prophet, are, the vastness of the Divine condescension and the gentleness of the Divine dealings :—the timid, the weak, the bruised, the burdened, the fallen, nestling in peace and safety under the Heavenly Palm-shade !

The great ones of the earth generally associate alone with the great. They are like the eagle, which holds little converse with the low, misty valley, when it can get up amid the blue skies and granite peaks. It is the powerful—the rich—the strong—the titled, who are the deified and worshipped. The weak, and poor, and powerless get but a small fraction of regard, and are too often left, unpitied and

uncared for, to endure the rough struggle of existence as best they may. And the world has accordingly shaped its divinities after this its own ideal. We see the embodiment of that ideal chiselled in the old slabs of Assyrian marble, where the winged bull or lion is depicted trampling its enemies in the dust—the strong trampling on the weak. But the early Christians had also *their* truer and nobler symbol, which they have left in rude device in the Roman catacombs : it is the embodiment of the first words which head this meditation—the oft-recurring representation of a Shepherd—the Great Shepherd of the Sheep—the Mighty God—carrying on His shoulder a feeble lamb.

Or, to take the figure employed in the second verse : what a word of encouragement to those who require tender dealing !—who are liable, it may be from constitutional temperament, to become the prey of doubts and fears ; sensitive in times of trial, irresolute in times of difficulty, unstable in times of temptation. The whole ministry and teaching of Christ were a significant comment on the prophetic utterance—“A bruised reed He will not break.” Simple but expressive emblem ! The most fragile object in nature is the shivering reed by the river side. The Eastern shepherd, tending his flock by the streams where these reeds grow, used them for his rustic pipe. When one of them was bruised or broken, he never made the attempt to mend it. Inserting it among the others would only have made his instrument discordant ; accordingly, he threw it aside as worthless. Not so the Great Shepherd. When a human soul is bruised and mutilated by sin, He casts it not away. He repairs it for its place in the heavenly instrument, and makes it once more to show forth His praise. Look at the Psalmist of Israel. Who more a “bruised reed” than he ? God had inspired his soul—made it a many-stringed instru-

ment in discoursing His praise ; but now it lay a broken mutilated thing, with the stain of crimson guilt upon it, tuneless and mute. "I kept silence," says he ; "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned unto the drought of summer." Does Jehovah desert him ?—does He cast the reed away and seek to replace the void by another, worthier and better ? Does He mock the cry of penitential sorrow as through anguished tears that stricken one thus implored forgiveness—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions"? No. Hear him detail his own experience—"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And then he takes up the retuned instrument, and sings for the encouragement of others—"For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." In the case of some aromatic plants, it is when bruised they give forth the sweetest fragrance ; so it is often the soul crushed with a sense of guilt which sends forth the sweetest aroma of humility, gratitude, and love. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Go, bruised one, broken with convictions of sin, or wounded in conscience—go, burdened one, weak and weary lamb of the flock, to this Shepherd of Souls ; and as thou liest in His bosom, hear His assurance of comfort and consolation—"I will remove thy shoulder from the burden"—"O Ephraim, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help." Think how He suffered the fallen to kiss His feet ! Think how He touched the kneeling leper, and washed the traitor's feet ! "JEHOVAH ROPHI, I am the

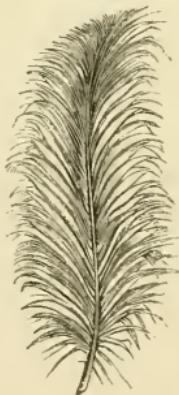
Lord that healeth thee :”—“ Neither do I condemn thee ; go and sin no more !”

How many in eternity will be able to testify, in the words of one of the psalms in which the minstrel King of Israel records his experience, as he takes a retrospect of his strangely chequered life—“ THY GENTLENESS HATH MADE ME GREAT !”

“ Hide and guard us in Thy tender arms
Till the wilderness of life be past ;
Save us from temptation’s fatal charms,
Seal us for Thine own from first to last.

“ Let Thy rod and staff in mercy lead us
In the footsteps of Thy flock below,
Till ’mid heavenly pastures Thou shalt feed us,
Where the streams of life eternal flow.”

“ O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD : BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT TRUSTETH IN HIM.”





XXVI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Not dead, but sleepeth."

—LUKE viii. 52.

"Thy brother shall rise again."

—JOHN xi. 23.

Sleeping and
Waking.

LET these words suggest thoughts of unutterable solace and refreshment to those who may now be seated in tears and sackcloth under the "Palms of the Valley."

Death is but *a quiet sleep*. The 'Bible,' it has been said, 'with its finger of *love*, turns what we dread into gold.' Here the Bible, with its finger of *life*, turns dreaded death into a peaceful slumber. Soon the morning hour shall strike; the waking time of immortality arrive; and the voice of Jesus will be heard, saying, "I go that I may awake them out of sleep."

It has been often noted that there is a beautiful and striking *progression* in our Lord's three miraculous raisings from the dead.* The *first* in point of time was in the case of the daughter of Jairus, spoken of in our first motto-verse.

* See Olshausen, Stier, Trench, and others.

She was raised immediately after death had taken place ; when the body was still laid on its death couch. Her soul had but taken its flight to the spirit-world, when the angels that bore it away were summoned to restore it. The *second*, in chronological order, was the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. Death had here achieved a longer triumph. The wonted time for lamentation had intervened ; he was being borne to his last home when the voice of Deity sounded over his bier. The *third* and last of this class of miracles, was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany. Over him death had attained a still more signal mastery. The funeral obsequies were over ; the sepulchral grotto held in its embrace ‘the loved and lost’—four days had these lips been sealed before the life-giving and life-restoring word was uttered.

There is one other gigantic step in this progression. “The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth !”

In the first case cited, the time elapsing between the dismissal of the spirit and its recall was measured by *moments*, the second by *hours*, the third by *days* ; the fourth is measured by *ages—centuries—A MILLENNIUM*. But what of that ? What though in conventional language we speak of the tomb as the “long home,” and death as “the long sleep”? By Him (with whom a thousand years is as one day), that precious, because redeemed dust, shall be gathered together, particle by particle. “I will ransom them,” He says, as He looks forward through the vista of ages to this glorious consummation, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” Blessed, thrice blessed assurance ! As

in the case of Jairus, it was his own loved daughter who, in form and feature, was again restored ; as the widow of Nain gazed on the unaltered countenance of her own cherished boy ; as the sisters of Lazarus saw in him who came forth from the grave, no alien form, strangely altered, but the brother of their hearts ; so, we believe, on that wondrous morning of immortality, shall the loved on earth wear their old familiar smiles and loving looks. They shall retain their personal identity. Nay, further ; as in the case of the ruler's daughter, her *parents* received her once more into their arms ; as in the case of the widow's son, it is expressly said, "they delivered him to his MOTHER ;" as in Bethany, we are allowed to look into the home circle again re-united ;—Jesus, once more, loving "Martha and Mary and Lazarus," and they loving one another ;—so may we believe that, on the Resurrection day, the affections which gladdened and hallowed homesteads here, shall not be dulled, quenched, annihilated ; but rather ennobled and purified. Like the fabled Phoenix (the "Palm-bird") they shall rise from their ashes in forms of new and more glorious life. Brothers, sisters, parents, children, shall be linked in the fond ties and memories of earth, gathering in loving groups under the shade of immortal palms, by the living fountains of waters, and singing together the Song of Eternity.

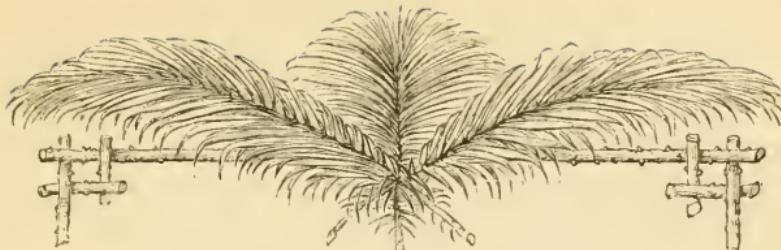
" We must not doubt, or fear, or dread,
That love for life is only given,
And that the calm and sainted dead
Will meet estranged and cold in heaven :
Oh, love were poor and vain indeed,
Based on so harsh and stern a creed.
• • • •
But that which makes this life so sweet
Shall render heaven's joy complete."

“ And the mother gave, in tears and pain,
The flowers she most did love ;
She knew she should find them all again
In the fields of light above.

“ Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath
The Reaper came that day,
’Twas an angel visited the green earth
And took the flowers away.”

“ SO HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.”





XXVII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

—ISA. li. 11.

The Return to Zion.

THESE words had doubtless a primary reference to Israel, seated, not under the old palms of the Sinai wilderness, but rather, at a later age, under the willow-trees of the streams of Babylon; on whose branches a poet of the Captivity so touchingly describes the captives as hanging their muffled harps, and weeping as they remembered Zion.

But they have a grander than local or temporary meaning. Every member of the true Israel of God, as he is seated under the figurative shadow, whether of palm or of willow, whether his experience be joyful or sorrowful, may take heart and courage from the description here given of travellers to a better than earthly Zion; Jehovah's own ransomed ones; whose captivity is turned "as streams in the south," and who are "more than conquerors through Him that loved them."

Taking the passage thus, in its highest spiritual interpretation, these Zionward travellers are beautifully represented, even in the course of their journey, as filled with peace and joy in believing, abounding in hope. Many, while they picture a coming heaven as a place of unmixed happiness and felicity, are apt to depict the way thither as one of gloom,—every pilgrim reaching it with the furrow on his brow and the tear in his eye ; that if any chimes of gladness reach his ears, they come from bells *within* the gates of the city, not without. But these words tell differently and more truly. There are palm-trees at Elim as well as “beyond Jordan.” The desert is resonant with song. Gladness and joy are here represented as two attendants—sister spirits, accompanying all the way, hand in hand. Yes ! the Christian is, or ought to be, a joyful man. Though it be a wilderness he treads, and though “sorrow and mourning” are also depicted as tracking his footsteps ; yet he has elements of tranquil happiness within him, which make the smile, not the tear, the appropriate exponent of his thoughts and emotions. It were strange, indeed, were it otherwise. At peace with God ; sin forgiven ; the heart changed ; the affections elevated ; grace moulding, sustaining, quickening, sanctifying ; and, rising above all, the assured hope of glory hereafter. He can say, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Ps. iv. 7). The words, too, seem to tell of an ever-augmenting joy. As the portals of glory draw nearer, the song deepens in melody and strength. They come to Zion “with singing ;” then “ever-lasting joy is on their head.” Then they obtain a new anointing of “gladness ;” and finally “sorrow and mourning”—these two companions of the wilderness, rise on their sombre, gloomy wings, and speed away for ever !

Is that happiness in any feeble measure ours? Can we appropriate to ourselves, in lowly, humble confidence, that grandest of titles here given to the desert sojourners, "The Redeemed of the Lord"? Have we on the pilgrim garb,—the Righteousness alike imputed and implanted—the attire of the King's daughter, all-glorious without,—"all-glorious within"? and is our chief element of joy in the prospect of the Heavenly Zion—not the negative one, the absence of sorrow and mourning—but that which consists in the vision and fruition of Zion's God, assimilation to His character, conformity to His will, active energy in His service, serving Him day and night in His Temple? With such a hope, we may well be patient under present trial; though 'sorrowful,' we may be 'always rejoicing.' "God our Maker giveth songs in the night." Better the night, with songs in it, than no night and no song. Better the wilderness and its Elim-groves, than Egypt with its flesh-pots and its bondage. Better the thorn in the nest to tempt to magnificent flight, than to settle in the downy nest of false security and ease, selfishness and death.

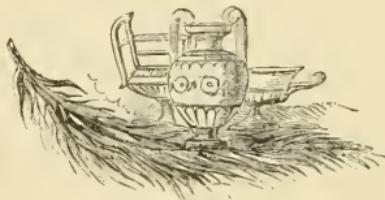
The world has its joys too; but, apart from God, they are a poor counterfeit of the true. They are often precarious, uncertain, fitful while they last; the grave will sooner or later close over them, when they will vanish like the transient flash of summer lightning, never to be recalled, or "as a dream when one waketh." But, Christians! "everlasting joy," like a festive chaplet or coronet, shall be upon your head. Yours are to be robes ever bright, palms ever green, crowns never fading. Elim with all its refreshment and rest, but none of its transience. "The Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

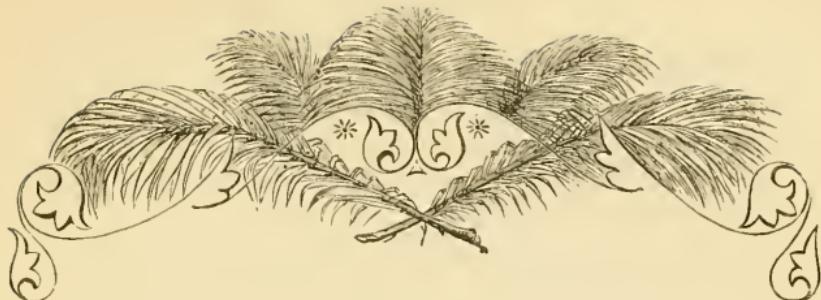
“ Here, the great unrest of ages ;
Here, the trouble, toil, and strife :
There, the peaceful, quiet waters
Of the crystal stream of life.

“ Here, the sighing of the branches ;
Here, the wave-beat on the shore :
There, the ceaseless strain of angels
Chanting praises evermore.

“ Here, the rocks and shoals and quicksands ;
Here, the home beneath the sod :
There, the haven where we would be ;
There, the presence of our God.”

“THEY SHALL HUNGER NO MORE, NEITHER THIRST ANY MORE,
NEITHER SHALL THE SUN LIGHT UPON THEM NOR ANY
HEAT. FOR THE LAMB THAT IS IN THE MIDST
OF THE THRONE SHALL FEED THEM, AND
LEAD THEM TO LIVING FOUNTAINS
OF WATER.”





XXVIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the
feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as
we are, yet without sin."*

—HEB. iv. 15.

The Great High Priest. AMID the whisperings from the fronds of these desert Palms, we cannot be wrong in averring, that there is one which has a music all its own—pre-eminently valued and cherished.

The consciousness even of human sympathy is most sacred, hallowed, and prized. In these dependent natures of ours, who, in the season of need has not longed for it: and when it comes, has not welcomed it like the presence of a ministering angel? Others working with us, feeling for us,—sharing our toils, helping us to carry our burdens; entering into our hopes, our joys, our sorrows; to see the responsive tear glistening in the eye;—all this is a mighty strengthener and sustainer amid the vicissitudes of chequered life. The martyr at the stake has been often nerved for endurance by the whisper of “Courage, brother!” from the fellow-victim at his side. How the Great Apostle in his Roman dungeon—when he was “such an one as Paul the

aged" was cheered by the visits of congenial friends, such as Timothy and Onesiphorus! How touchingly does the illustrious captive invoke God's richest benediction on the latter and on his household, for "oft refreshing him and not being ashamed of his chain." On the other hand, how sad those circumstances when bereft of all such support—when left to drift hopelessly away from human brotherhood, and to be like a stranded vessel on life's lonely, inhospitable shore!

If *human* sympathy be thus gladdening and grateful, what must be the pure—exalted—sinless—unselfish sympathy emanating from the Great Brother-Man;—the Heavenly Palm-Tree in the midst of the earthly encampment—*the sympathy of Jesus, the adorable High Priest of His Church?*

"He was in all points tempted." His is a deep, yearning, real sympathy, arising out of His true and real humanity. He came not with an Angel-nature or an Angel-life. He was not, as many falsely picture Him, half Angel, half God: looking down on a fallen world from the far-distant heights of His heavenly throne. But He descended, and walked in the midst of it, pitching His tent among its families: "He took not on Him the nature of Angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." The Great Physician lived in the world's hospital. He did not write out His cures in His remote dwelling in the skies, refusing to come into personal contact with the patients. He walked its every ward. With His own hand He felt the fevered pulses; His own eyes gazed on the sufferer's tears. He stood not by the fiery furnace as a spectator, but there was One in it "like the Son of God." He thought our thoughts. He wept our tears. Yes, we repeat, that Great Being now in heaven, unseen, invisible to mortal eye, so entered when on

earth into the subtlest and tenderest sensibilities of our emotional frames, that the heart of His glorified humanity still thrills responsive to every pang in the souls of the people. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." "He knoweth their frame," for He had that frame Himself. Every throb they feel, evokes a kindred pulsation in the bosom of the Prince of Sufferers : "for He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (nature). Though changed in His outward estate from the Pilgrim Redeemer to that of the exalted Priest and King, His sympathetic feelings know no change, for He is "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever."

"His," it has been well said by a thinker of modern days, who struggled manfully upwards from sceptic doubt to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, "His is a sympathy like that of a parent for a child, which is surely the deeper and the tenderer for being above the sphere of its little passions and mistakes. Whose sympathy with a child is best and truest? that of another child who has all the same follies and errors and petty interests and cares, or that of a mother, who knows them all, but does not on her own behalf share in them; who lives in them, and feels for them only through her love?" Such is the sympathy of Jesus.

There are times when the blessed shade of this Psalm is specially needful. There are crisis-hours in our lives when we require, in no ordinary way, strong support: when, like Jacob at Bethel, or John at Patmos, we are all alone in a desolate place;—the sun of our earthly happiness set: beloved earthly friends vanished and gone. Then, when we may be giving vent to the vain, hopeless wail of smitten hearts, "Joseph is not and Simeon is not," the despairing cry for succour *is* answered, although not in the sense perhaps we desired or longed for. The Saviour Himself

delights to come, showing us the ladder which connects the pillow of stones and the weary sleeper with the heights of heaven : or, as in the case of the lonely exile of the Ægean sea, raising us from our prostrate condition, as “ He lays His right hand upon us,” and whispers in our ears His own gentle accents of reassuring peace ;—“ Fear not ! I AM ” (in My unchanging human sympathy as the Elder Brother) “ I am He that liveth and was dead !”

“ Then One, more fair than all the rest to see,
One to whom all the others bowed the knee,
Came to me gently, as I trembling lay,
And, ‘ Follow Me !’ He said, ‘ This is the way.’

“ At length to Him I raised my saddened heart ;
He knew its sorrows, bid its doubts depart.
‘ Be not afraid,’ He said, ‘ but trust in Me,
My perfect love shall now be shown to thee.’

“ And now henceforth my one desire shall be,
That He who knows me best should choose for me ;
And so, whate’er His love sees good to send,
I’ll trust it’s best, because He knows the end.”

“ THE LORD GOD HATH GIVEN ME THE TONGUE OF THE
LEARNED, THAT I SHOULD KNOW HOW TO SPEAK A
WORD IN SEASON TO HIM THAT IS WEARY.”



XXIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God
chasteneth thee."*

—DEUT. viii. 5.

**Fatherly
Chastisement.** COME, child of affliction, and seat thyself under the shadow of this precious verse —this sheltering palm. God chastens thee as a parent. “Can anything,” says Harrington Evans, in one of his many brief aphorisms, “dry up tears like this—‘my Father’?”

When an earthly parent uses the rod, he may, like Joseph to his brethren, speak and act with apparent roughness; but who can tell the pangs that all the while are rending his heart—the yearning love with which he regards his prodigal at the very moment he is chastising him! The rod is in a Father’s hands—“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.” An earthly father may act capriciously—from impulse and passion: God never can, never does. An earthly father may misunderstand his child; he may deal with unnecessary severity; he may use words of harshness when more wholesome and considerate would have been words of kindness. Not so is it with Him who says, “I will correct thee *in*

measure." He metes out every drop in the cup. He wisely and lovingly adapts His dealings to the case, necessities, and exigencies of His people. "Like as a father"—yea, we may truly say, more tenderly than a father—"pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him. For He (unlike the kindest earthly parent) *knoweth our frame*—He remembereth that we are dust."

Surely this is, after all, Christianity's noblest and most precious revelation of God. The revelation of Him as a Spirit—the Great Unseen, Unknown, Untraceable, Intangible—everywhere present, beneath, around, about me—with the eye of unerring scrutiny searching the secret labyrinths of the heart :—how august, solemn, awe-inspiring ! "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?" But God the FATHER—*my* Father : the feeling of awe encompassing the Supreme, melts into affection. That All-Seeing One is the archetype of the dearest of human relations—the earthly parent is the shadowy image of the Heavenly !

Specially in the season of affliction, to which our motto-verse refers, is that name suggestive of tenderest consolation. Who, of all the family, does the parent on earth most love and anxiously care for ? Is it not the sick and suffering child ? The strong shrubs are left to grapple with the storm ; it is the weak and fragile ones that are specially tended and sheltered from biting frost or scorching sun. The ninety and nine are left by the shepherd to roam at will, unintended, on the mountain side ; but the one, footsore, fleece-torn wanderer—the one sick or wounded—he grudges no length of journey to succour, or to bear back on his shoulder, rejoicing, to the fold.

Sorrowing one, it is on *you* this great God lavishes His deepest, profoundest sympathy. You are the battered

flower He loves most to tend—you are the drooping member of the flock whose wounds He loves most to bind up. As one whom his “father pitith” (Ps. ciii. 13), “as one whom his mother comforteth” (Isa. lxvi. 13). Repose in quiet confidence under His Heavenly discipline. If even now He be laying upon thee chastisements, seek not to arraign or question the infinite love and wisdom of His dealings; but, remembering in whose hand is the rod, be it yours to say, with unmurmuring lips—“THY WILL BE DONE.”

“ The way is dark, my Father ! Cloud on cloud
Is gathering thickly o'er my head, and loud
The thunders roar above me. See, I stand
Like one bewildered ! Father ! take my hand.

“ The way is dark, my child ! but leads to light ;
I would not always have thee walk by sight.
My dealings now thou canst not understand,
I meant it so ; but I will take thy hand.

“ The day goes fast, my Father ! and the night
Is drawing darkly down. My faithless sight
Sees ghostly visions : fears, a spectral band,
Encompass me. O Father ! take my hand.

“ The day goes fast, my child ! But is the night
Darker to Me than day ? In Me is light !
Keep close to Me, and every spectral band
Of fears shall vanish. I will take thy hand.

“ The way is long, my Father ! and my soul
Longs for the rest and quiet of the goal.
While yet I journey through this weary land,
Keep me from wandering. Father ! take my hand.

“ The way is long, my child ! But it shall be
Not one step longer than is best for thee ;
And thou shalt know, at last, when thou shalt stand
Safe at the goal, how I did take thy hand.”

“ EVEN SO, FATHER ! FOR SO IT SEEMED GOOD IN THY SIGHT.”



XXX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"But Thou art the same."—Ps. cii. 27.

God Unchanging. THIS is an antithetical clause ; a statement which is placed in contrast with something preceding, in order to bring the truth it contains more strongly and powerfully before us. The sacred writer deepens the shadows of his background, to give a more vivid prominence to a great Pillar of natural and revealed belief, *the Immutability of God*. The background ! it is the dark, fitful, flitting shadows of time and sense. He thus chronicles their history—“*They shall perish.*” His foreground ! it is the changeless and unchanging Jehovah, “*But Thou art the same.*”

The highest and sublimest verities in theology are oft supported alike by reason and revelation. What says *reason* with regard to the Divine Immutability ? That if God be a changeable Being He cannot be perfect, for mutability is the necessary attribute of imperfection. Again (if we dare venture for a moment the supposition), that if God were to undergo a change, it must be an *Infinite* change ; moreover, it must be one of these three (I quote the words of an old divine)—(1.) A change for the *better*.

This would suppose present imperfection. Or (2.) a change for the *worse*; bold and blasphemous impiety, which would reduce the Holy One to a level with the creature. A third supposition—most presumptuous of all—is that of *annihilation*. This would leave the world *without God*, which would be a contradiction in terms.

Turn we, now, to what is the testimony of revealed scripture. That testimony, though uttered in diverse forms, may be comprised in the one assertion, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. iii. 6). Glorious truth! To think, as imagination wings its flight from everlasting to everlasting, that in the existence of the Being whose lifetime is eternity, there has been no “variableness;”—that He was the same before the world was; that He is the same now; and will be the very same, ages and ages after the angel has stood on the wreck of matter and proclaimed “Time to be no longer:”—as perfect at the present moment as He can be when an “eternity of eternity” shall have rolled by.

But in what respects may this unchangeableness of God be regarded as a ‘Palm of Elim,’ imparting a sense of rest and refreshment to those encamping under its shadow? Comforting doctrine it undoubtedly is. It leads us, among other reflections, to feel assured of His certain foreknowledge of all events. That whatever can befall us must be His ordination; and that the fitful changes in a changing world,—our relations to one another, our domestic and social ties, our joys and our sorrows, are ordained, watched, controlled by Him, who sitteth enthroned alike amid the radiant sunshine and above and behind the cloudlands of life; bringing good out of seeming evil, order out of apparent confusion; overruling all (ALL), for His own glory and for the best interests of His Church. He is

spoken of as “the Father of lights with whom is no . . . shadow of turning” (James i. 17). “This,” observes an eminent Christian of a former age, commenting on the words, “is His disposition. An act of love may be very kind, but there is no security for the future. But when the *disposition* is love—unchanging love—all must be loving because He is love—all must be wise because He is wisdom.” “God,” says the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. vi. 17, 18).

There is a view of this peerless truth connected with our motto-verse, pre-eminently comforting, to which we have not yet adverted. The passage of which that verse forms a part, has, by Scriptural warrant (Heb. i. 10-12) a special application to the adorable Person in the sacred Trinity, who is pre-eminently *the PALM* under whose shadow His Pilgrim Israel repose. Christ, the God-man Mediator, may be supposed (in vers. 23-27) to address His Divine Father—“He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days.” Then follows the Father’s answer:—“Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end” (vers. 24-27). Yes, of Jesus, wearing our glorified human nature—the sympathies of a refined and

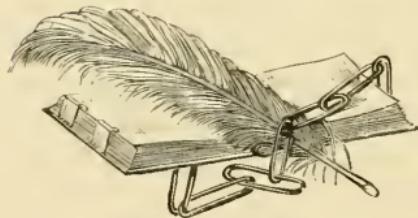
exalted humanity, we can say, "Thou art the same." The unchangeableness of God absolute we could take little hold of: it is high, we cannot attain to it. But "the Man Christ Jesus;"—the same as He lived and moved and suffered and died on earth; the same in His compassion, in His words of mercy, in His messages of love, in His tenderness to the penitent, the fearful, the doubting; in His sympathy with the bereaved and lonely; and who no longer with tears to shed, has still the heart to feel:—Oh, when the spirit is rent with sorrow, and wounded with thoughts into which the cold world cannot enter; when estrangement severs brother from brother and friend from friend; where can the eye peacefully repose but on this unchanging ONE? "BUT THOU art the same!" Truly this is "an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast," for it "entereth into that within the veil!"

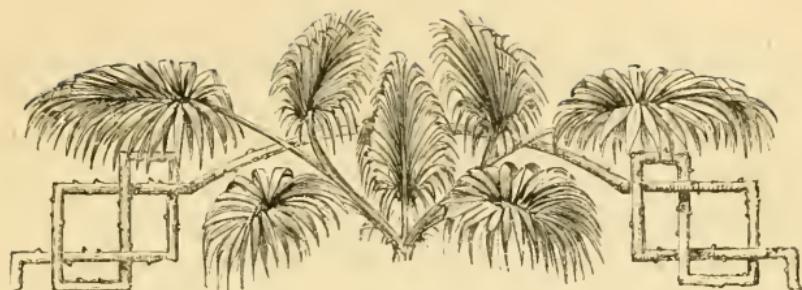
Change is our portion here. The Psalmist in this passage points to the spangled heavens above, and the apparently immovable, immutable foundations of the earth beneath, and inscribes on them the record, "*They* shall perish. As a vesture Thou shalt fold them up" (as a worn-out garment which the Almighty Maker lays aside, as for no more use). When everything within and around us may be echoing the same sad verdict, blessed it is to be able to turn from the unstable to the stable; from the reed which the blast may bend and the hurricane shiver, to the Great living Rock which spurns the storm and defies all change! In a word, to lay firm grasp on the glorious antithesis of Israel's Kingly Minstrel. It is God in contrast with man; Immutability in contrast with mutability, the Infinite with the finite, the mortal with the Immortal, Eternity with time. "*But* THOU art the same!"

“ Our years are like the shadows
 On sunny hills that lie ;
Or flowers that deck the meadows
 That blossom but to die ;
A sleep, a dream, a story,
 By strangers quickly told,
An evanescent glory
 Of things that soon are old.

“ O God ! the Rock of Ages,
 Who evermore hast been,
What time the tempest rages
 Our dwelling-place serene.
Before Thy first creations
 Thou wert the same as now,
To endless generations
 The Everlasting Thou ! ”

“ AND THEY THAT KNOW THY NAME SHALL PUT THEIR
 TRUST IN THEE.”





XXXI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He healed them all."—MATT. xiii. 15.

Healing for All. THE last words which fell upon the ears of Israel before coming to Elim, and while they were yet encamped at Marah, were these—“JEHOVAH ROPHI,” “I am the Lord which healeth thee.”

Christ is this Great Physician—the Universal Healer—the Curer of every species and every case of spiritual paralysis. The appeal of the weeping prophet is silenced in the presence of the Divine Restorer:—“Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?” (Jer. viii. 22). Amid endless diversities of country, climate, language, manners, civilisation;—in the polished age, the uncivilised age, the philosophic age, the war age, the utilitarian age, the human heart is found the same: and the One Physician, the one medicine, “Christ crucified,” is able to heal *all* diseases. “He is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” To *every one!* We may follow the sun in his fiery course as he circles the globe, and in vain shall we search for the spot on which he shines, where this Gospel may not be freely proclaimed.

Let none stand in doubt, owing to any peculiarity of cir-

cumstance, as to their warrant to appropriate the purchased blessings of Redemption. There is but one condition which, using another figure, the Divine Healer Himself employs, as He invites His Pilgrim people to the true ‘Wells of Elim,’—“If any man *thirst*, let him come unto Me and drink.” No other condition is there, in partaking of the living fountains. The quality of water is not affected by the nature of the vessel which contains it; the water is the same, whether it be taken in a golden goblet or an earthen jar;—by the king holding it in his jewelled cup, or the beggar that has no cup but the palm of his hands. So is it with the water in the wells of Salvation. Around these, the rich and poor, naturally and spiritually, meet together; and whether it be with vessels of great, or vessels of small quantity,—“vessels of cups” or “vessels of flagons,”—the invitation is the same, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “Him that cometh unto Me” (irrespective of all sins, shortcomings, moral disabilities) “I will in no wise cast out.” Look at that scene in the early Church, Peter and John healing the impotent man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It was an acted parable of the healing influence of the Gospel and the Gospel’s Author. That helpless cripple, at the all-powerful name of “JESUS OF NAZARETH,” cast aside his crutches, rose from his couch of abject helplessness, with strength in his powerless limbs, and praise on his long-sealed lips. And next day, when the two apostles were summoned before the high priest, with the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and interrogated thus, “By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” Peter nobly replied (and it is a reply applicable to every diseased, helpless, sin-stricken sinner, who has risen from his couch of misery and entered the Temple of

grace, walking, and leaping, and praising God), “If we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of *Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by HIM doth this man stand here before you whole” (Acts iv. 9, 10).

That all-powerful name and that all-powerful theme has lost none of its efficacy. May its music gladden us through life! As we move from encampment to encampment in the pilgrim journey, may “peace through the blood of His cross” be the gracious words which fall on our ears as we strike the tent and prepare to prosecute the unknown way. May they be the last to cheer us when our footsteps are on the brink of Jordan!

Let us listen, in closing, to words from one of the “Hymns of the Fatherland”:

“ Weep not, Jesus *heareth* thee,
 Hears thy moanings broken,
Hears when thou right wearily
 All thy grief hast spoken.
 Raise thy cry,
 He is nigh,
Everything on earth be shaken,
Thou wilt never be forsaken.

“ Weep not, Jesus *HEALETH* thee ;
 He shall come and surely save ;
And each sorrow thou shalt see
 Lie buried in thy grave.

 Sin shall die,
 Grief shall fly.

Thou hast wept thy latest tears
When the Lord of life appears.”

“COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY
LADED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.”



XXXII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He ruleth by His power for ever."—Ps. lxvi. 7.

Divine Power. THE Psalm from which these words are taken is one of the many that were inspired by memories of the Sinai wilderness,—the great drama of the Exodus. The words of our motto-verse are ushered in by the proudest of these memories—“Come and see the works of the Lord, . . . He turned the sea into dry land. They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in Him. . . . He ruleth by His power for ever.” Varied are the figures employed by the sacred minstrel in describing the illustrious event. Jehovah had broken the meshes of the enclosing net (11). From the fire of Egypt’s brick-kilns He had rescued them (12). Through the furnace they had emerged purified (10). Through the raging flood of the Red Sea He had conducted them (6). They had only to “stand still and see the salvation of God” (5 and 12). “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and through water; but THOU broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (vers. 10-12).

An emancipation effected from the territory of the greatest and proudest of the old world dynasties:—an enslaved people, in the might of their God, rising in a night, breaking their chains, leaving every memento of bondage and degradation behind them; and after a miraculous march of forty years, at last entering triumphantly the promised land. All this could not have been accomplished without the cognisance of the surrounding nations. Hence the Psalmist, remembering these glorious ‘works of the Lord and His wonders of old,’ breaks out into a lofty appeal to the kingdoms of his own age to recognise the hand of Israel’s Jehovah. (ver. 1.) “ Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of His name; make His praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible art Thou in Thy works! through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee. . . . *He ruleth by His power for ever.*”

What a glorious palm-shade underneath which to encamp! What an unspeakably comforting assurance, whether to nations or to individuals, that the same mighty hand which shattered the chains of the Hebrew bondsmen and smote the tongue of the Egyptian sea, may be recognised in every event which befalls His people—every public calamity, every domestic heart-sorrow. Whether it be the bondage and deliverance of a nation, or the preparing and withering of a family gourd, we can write above all, “ He ruleth by His power for ever.” Whether He smites or heals, darkens or gladdens, gives or takes away, it is ours to say, in the words of this inspiring hymn (vers. 8, 9), “ O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard, *which holdeth our soul in life.*” Life is His. He kindles the spark, and, when He sees meet, He quenches it. Death is but the revocation of His own grant, the lapsing of the lease

into the hands of life's great Proprietor. “*He* turneth man to destruction, and saith, Return, ye children of men.”

The psalm is supposed by some to have been specially composed by David on the occasion of that great festival at the end of his reign, when, after having collected material for his projected Temple on Mount Moriah, ‘all Israel’ assembled, at the summons of their aged king, and in response to his appeal, “consecrated their service unto the Lord.” What could be more natural than for the minstrel monarch, at such a time, to revert in the first instance to God’s wondrous transactions with them as a nation, ever since the hour of the Exodus; and then to pass to a *personal* retrospect of God’s dealings with himself throughout his chequered history, from the morning of his life in the valleys of Bethlehem till now, when the sun was westering and the shadows were falling? He too had to tell of varied sorrows. He too had been tried as silver is tried. He too had been brought through fire and through water, and had affliction laid upon his loins, (affliction which few bereaved parents are called to endure).—But even on the mingled retrospect, in which all these figures of speech met,—the furnace, the net, the fire, the flood, the sackclothed loins—he could see mercy,—rich, undeserved mercy, mingling with and tempering judgment. The dark clouds of his stormy life-career were alternated with glorious sunshine; the dreary spots of the wilderness were far outnumbered by the green. Elim palms stood conspicuous amid stretches of barren sand. And remembering how graciously God had heard his prayers in the past, succoured him in trouble, and made his earthly trials conspire for the good of his soul, we can understand how appropriately he records his votive resolve in ver. 13, “I will go into Thy house with

burnt offerings, I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble. I will offer unto Thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams, I will offer bullocks with goats. Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.” He gives to God all the glory of his past deliverances and triumphs. He takes none to himself. “Sing forth,” he says, “the honour of His name . . . which suffereth not our feet to be moved.”

The psalm and its many devout and instructive sentiments was designed for the Church of God and believers in every age. Its lessons are not local but universal. The safe and triumphant passage of Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan of old, are pledges of covenant mercy to His people in all times and in all seasons of affliction. Through every sea of sorrow and trouble He makes a passage for them, gives songs in the night, takes off their sackcloth, and girds them with gladness. It is a striking assertion, “through *the flood*” (the place where we might have expected nothing but trembling and terror, anguish and dismay),—“there,” says the Psalmist, “did we rejoice in Him !”

How many there are who can endorse this as their experience: that “there,” in their very seasons of distress and sadness, they have been enabled, as they never did before, to triumph and rejoice. How near their God in covenant is brought! how brightly shine His promises! In the day of our prosperity we cannot see the brilliancy of these. Like the sun at noon, hiding out the stars from sight, they are undiscernible; but when night overtakes, the deep dark night of sorrow, out come these clustering stars—blessed constellations of Bible hope and promise and consolation.

Like Jacob at Jabbok, it is when our earthly sun goes down that the Divine Angel comes forth, and we wrestle with Him and prevail. It was at night, "in the evening," Aaron lit the sanctuary lamps. It is in the night of trouble the brightest lamps of the believer are often kindled. It was in his loneliness and exile John had the glorious vision of his Redeemer. There is many a Patmos still in the world, whose brightest remembrances are those of God's presence and upholding grace and love in solitude and sadness. How many pilgrims, still passing through these Red Seas and Jordans of earthly affliction, will be enabled in the retrospect of eternity to say,—full of the memories of God's great goodness, "We went through the flood on foot, THERE" (there, in those dark experiences, with the surging waves on every side, deep calling to deep, Jordan, as when Israel crossed, it in 'the time of overflowing,' (flood), yet "THERE did we rejoice in Him!"

"Sing forth the honour of His name, and make His praise glorious." There are seasons, indeed, when we cannot tune the harp of broken strings, when the summons of the 5th verse is more appropriately ours, "Come, and see the works of God, *He is terrible in His doing* towards the children of men." When we have to say unto Him, "How terrible art Thou in Thy works." But while justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, mercy and truth go continually before His face. While "God hath spoken once, yea twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God; *Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.*" "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing!" "We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place!"

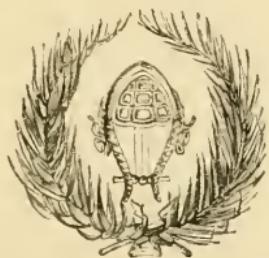
Occupying now the glorious place of security, which can alone be found in Christ and His finished salvation, let us

commit the keeping of our souls, and of all near and dear to us, to Him for the future in well doing ; knowing that there will be no floods or fires sent but what He appoints ; and, if sent, let us seek to be able to say, "Thy will be done !" That so we may come at last to stand without fault before the throne, with every flood passed, every fire quenched, every tear dried. With room found provided, for all whom death has severed from us, in that "wealthy place" above ; and confident then, at least, that the Divine dispensations and dealings were for our good, we shall be able to utter the invitation, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul."

" Source of my life's refreshing springs,
 Whose presence in my heart sustains me,
 Thy love appoints me pleasant things,
 Thy mercy orders all that pains me.

" Well may Thy own beloved, who see
 In all their lot their Father's pleasure,
 Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,
 Their living, everlasting treasure."

" I WILL TRUST IN THE COVERT OF THY WINGS."





XXXIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.”

“The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

—Ps. xxxvii. 23, 39.

Providence and
Grace.

HERE are two fronds of God's palm-grove bending over His true people.

Consolatory, as we have seen, is the great fundamental truth of theology—"The Lord reigneth :" that all events are ordered and controlled by a supreme superintending Providence. But there is a special comfort to believers—the spiritual Israel of every age,—that their 'steps,' their plans and purposes in life (in a better and nobler than the heathen sense—their "destinies"), are overruled by a gracious covenant-Jehovah.

That is a beautiful picture given in Hosea (xi. 1-5) of God, as a Father, watching and guiding the steps of His own children. Israel is first spoken of as a child in its parent's arms. The Almighty, all-loving Parent is represented, next, as assisting the feeble little one in its first attempts to walk, supporting it in case of stumbling:—"I taught Ephraim also to go, *taking them by their arms.*" Then, still farther, He is described as putting them in

leading-strings, following them step by step:—"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." And now, in this psalm, when the child has advanced to years of spiritual maturity, the inspired writer asserts the continuance and permanency of this same gracious paternal care and supervision:—"A good man's steps are ordered by the Lord." The earthly parent, after a few brief years, leaves the child to its own resources, to walk alone, and care for itself. Not so our Heavenly Father. The *man's* footsteps, as well as the *child's*, are 'ordered.' In all the varied circumstances of existence, the Eternal God is still his refuge; and, with the eye of the watchful mother on tottering infancy, "underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii. 27). "Although he fall, yet shall he not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand!" (Ps. xxxvii. 24). And as he pursues his onward way, at times ready to faint, ready to fall—stumbling along the rough, stony path,—his cry is never unsuccoured, his prayer never unanswered, "Hold *Thou* me up, and I shall be safe:—"Thy right hand shall save me!" Oh blessed assurance, that every event, every so called contingency;—every step from the infancy of grace to the manhood of glory, every rugged ascent, every thorny brake, every trial and every tear, is "ordered by the Lord."

The sweet singer of Israel rises, ere the psalm is closed, to a kindred and yet loftier subject of gratitude and adoration. While he exults in a God of Providence, he keeps his last note for a God of Grace:—"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord" (ver. 39). It was the theme which cheered and supported himself in the ever-present consciousness of a guilty though forgiven past. It was the theme ("the everlasting covenant well ordered in all things

and sure") which thrilled on his dying lips when the chequered glories of earthly sovereignty were passing away for ever, and he was about to take up the nobler minstrelsy of the skies—"This is all my salvation and all my desire!" He magnifies the name and doings and sovereign love of the same God whom He had trusted as his Shepherd (Ps. xxiii. 1), who had nerved his arm for empire and tuned his lips for praise, who had led him to the green pastures of grace, and at last brought him to the gates of glory.

"*Salvation is of the Lord!*" Let that, too, be the keynote of our life song. All is of grace. When the vessel of our eternal destinies was wrecked and stranded, it was a tide flowing from the sea of His own infinite love which set it once more floating on the waters. He might have left us to perish. He might have put a vial into every angel's hand to pour down vengeance on an apostate world; or, taking the figure suggested by this Volume, He might have left our earth the waste howling wilderness sin had made it; morally and spiritually, without shade of palm or music of fountain. How different! In the words of the Great Prophet, "The Lord hath comforted Zion: He hath comforted all her waste places; He hath made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord; joy and gladness (not dirge or wailing) is found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody" (Isa. li. 3). "*God sent NOT His Son into the world to CONDEMN the world, but that the world through Him might be SAVED.*"

And what is there to hinder any from making every blessing of that great salvation their own? Not God, for He "hath justified!" Not Christ, for He "hath died!" We cannot say with the king of Nineveh, "*Who can tell if God will turn?*" He *will* turn. He *has* turned. To each

individual sinner He declares, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." To all who are willing to listen to His pleadings, He seems to say in the words He puts into the mouth of Isaiah: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. lv. 3). The "*sure*" mercies! What is sure or abiding under the sun? Our *health*? The strong frame may in a moment be bowed, and the hectic glow mount to the cheek of manhood. Our *wealth*? By some sudden collapse it may take wings and flee away. Our *friends*? A word—a look—may estrange some; the grave, in the case of others, may have put its impressive mockery on the dream of earth's immortality. Our *homes*? The summons comes to strike our tent, and leave behind us the Elim-palms under which we long reposed, or the smouldering hearths of a hallowed past, so that "the place that once knew us, knows us no more." But *here* is one thing *sure*. Here is a Covenant which has the pillars of immutability to rest upon. Casting our anchor within the veil, we can out-ride the storm; the golden chain of grace links us to the throne of God. And when the chequered scenes and vicissitudes of the present are ended, and we are brought to take our stand amid the multitude which no man can number—"the harpers on the glassy sea;"—it will be to resume the twofold song and theme of earth—the God who *reigns*, and the God who *saves*:—the anthem of Providence and the anthem of Grace; for there they sing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. xv. 3).

" 'A little while' for patient vigil keeping,
To face the storm, to wrestle with the strong;
'A little while,' to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves and sing the harvest song.

“ ‘A little while,’ mid shadow and illusion,
To strive by faith Love’s mysteries to spell ;
Then read each dark enigma’s clear solution,
And hail Light’s verdict—‘ He doth all things well.’

“ ‘A little while,’ the earthly pitcher taking
To wayside brooks from far-off fountains fed,
Then the parched lip its thirst for ever slaking
Beside the fulness of the Fountainhead.

“ And He who is at once both Gift and Giver,
The future glory and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad ‘for ever,’
Will light the shadows of ‘the little while.’”

“ TRULY MY SOUL WAITETH UPON GOD : FROM HIM COMETH
MY SALVATION.”





XXXIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"We shall be changed."—I COR. xv. 52.

Transformation
at Death.

ANOTHER glimpse, beneath the palm-trees, of the distant horizon, bringing with it a restful and tranquillising assurance.

How many are led, from time to time, to disquiet themselves with the inward musing—the soliloquy of no feigned humility,—‘ How can we, with all our wretched frailties and shortcomings, our memories of guilt and backsliding—with some, it may be, the remembrance of scarlet and crimson stains—dream of admission into the world of unsullied purity, undimmed and undefiled by the intrusion of one unhallowed thought? How can we, ragged, sin-stricken, woe-worn, desert travellers, be fitted for the angel-life and angel-service of the Heavenly Canaan ? ’

I answer.—A glorious change will pass on your now partially renovated spirits, at death. “ It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.” These, at present, drooping, lagging, “ unmeet ” souls, will, by a transforming process which we cannot now venture to imagine or comprehend, be made fit for the holy presence and enjoyment of a holy God.

Go to the garden, from which winter has just been removing its icy mantle—and over which the first breath of genial spring has been passing. Watch on the gravel-walk or nestling on the rockery, that repulsive insect;—you half wonder how God, the infinite Architect, in the plenitude of His skill, could not have devised something more beauteous than this little mass of inert life! But bend your steps to that same sunny nook when the balmy zephyrs of a July morning are wasted by. What see you now? That forbidding chrysalis has unlocked its secret;—that tiny prison-house has sent forth a joyous captive, radiant with beauty. See it with spangled body and golden wings, revelling amid the luscious sweets and the play of sunshine—each flower opening its cup and making it welcome to its daintiest treasures. What a feeble image of the transformed, metamorphosed spirit, in that hour when, life's winter's storms all past, it bursts its prison-bars—“leaves its encumbering clay;” and, gifted with angel-wings, soars aloft to summer in the bliss of the beatific presence! “O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?” “God will perfect that which concerneth you.” In that last solemn moment—“in the twinkling of an eye”—He will fit you, by “the working of His mighty power,” for taking your place among the spirits of the just made perfect, and for being one of the rejoicing multitude who are “without fault before the throne.” Bunyan represents Mr. Feeble-mind and Mr. Ready-to-halt, after all their timorous thoughts, as safe at last. He describes the post as sounding his horn at their chamber doors. “I am come to thee,” says the postman, addressing the latter—“I am come to thee from Christ, whom thou hast followed on crutches. He expects thee at His table to sup with Him in His kingdom;” and then He pictures him, on

reaching the brink of the river, as throwing away his crutches. So will it be with many of God's true people, who are indulging needless apprehensions, "because of the oppression of the enemy." If fearful now, the day is coming, the day of the great gathering of souls, when, like the pilgrim Hebrews of old, you will stand triumphant on the farther shore, exulting in the truth of your Heavenly Father's assurance, which you may at present be so slow to credit—"Your enemies whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." You may now be wailing, in notes of sadness, your weakness and feebleness. Like some captive bird, you may fancy that your wings are disabled, your energies paralysed, your song silenced. But not so. In God's own time the cage will be opened, and on new-born wings of faith and love, you will go singing to the gate of Paradise, and catch up the melody of kindred song wafted from its groves of bliss !

Paul's spiritual experience, as that of many, was reflected figuratively in one of the most memorable incidents of his human life. For successive days and nights he was buffeted with winds and waves and darkness on the sea of Adria, "Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts xxvii. 20). But what is his closing entry in that record of imminent peril? "They escaped all safe to land" (ver. 44). "O wretched man that I am!"—breathes out in another place "that strong swimmer in his agony," as he is breasting the moral and spiritual current which threatens to bear him down—"who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But knowing that his, at last, will be sure deliverance and triumph, the accents of faith are heard loud above surge and cataract—"I thank God, through Jesus Christ our

Lord" (Rom. vii. 24, 25). As if He said, 'He will deliver me; He will save me. He will "change this vile body and fashion it like unto His own glorious body." He will change this vile soul and transform it into His own image from glory to glory. The storm of the stormiest life will then be changed into a calm !'

" After tired tossing,
Fighting with foam ;
After waves dashing,
Haven and home.

" After wound-fever,
Healing and balm ;
After winds warring,
Quiet and calm.

" After hard rowing,
Resting the hand ;
After long sowing,
Reaping the land.

" After dark dungeon,
The hill-top free ;
After earth, heaven—
What will it be ? "

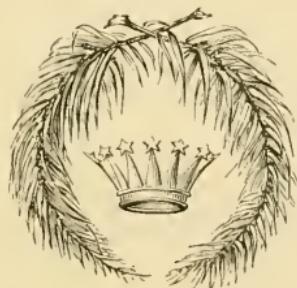
" When the shaded pilgrim land
Fades before my closing eye,
Then revealed on either hand
Heaven's own scenery shall lie.
Then the veil of flesh shall fall,
Now concealing, darkening all.

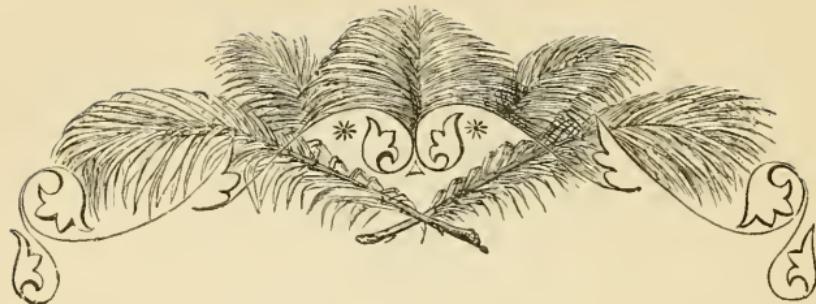
" When upon my wearied ear
Earth's last echoes faintly die ;
Then shall angel harps draw near,
All the chorus of the sky.
Long-hushed voices blend again,
Sweetly in that welcome strain.

“ Here were sweet and varied tones,
Bird, and breeze, and fountain’s fall,
Yet creations travail-groans
Ever sadly sighed through all ;
There no discord jars the air,
Harmony is perfect there.

“ Here devotion’s healing balm
Often came to soothe my breast,
Hours of deep and holy calm,
Earnests of eternal rest.
But the bliss was here unknown
Which shall there be all my own.”

“ THEN ARE THEY GLAD BECAUSE THEY BE QUIET ; SO HE
BRINGETH THEM UNTO THEIR DESIRED HAVEN.”





XXXV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He took upon Him the form of a servant."

—PHIL. ii. 7.

The Encarnate Saviour. “THE Word was made flesh, and dwelt (lit. tented) among us.” Yes, He, the true Heavenly Palm (if it be allowable for a moment to mix the metaphor) Himself came down amid the wilderness grove ; He the Pilgrim of Pilgrims, in infinite condescension and love, pitched His tent in the midst of the human encampment ! How comforting and consoling, our Divine Redeemer thus identifying Himself with our tried, tempted, woe-worn humanity ! Moreover, that in stooping to assume our nature, He selected not the exalted condition, but linked Himself rather with poverty and distress and dependence, in order that the poorest and the humblest, the most wretched and forlorn, might catch balm-words of comfort from His lips,—the lips of Him who often had not where to lay His head.

Let us think of that lowly nature of His, thus embracing in its amplitude every class and every phase of being, even those who had hitherto been neglected and disowned. Rome was accustomed to deify the manly virtues alone—

strength, courage, heroic endurance. Greece wreathed her chaplets around the brows of her intellectual heroes,—her poets and philosophers, her sculptors and painters. But the weak, the ignorant, the oppressed, had none to vindicate their cause till *He* came, who pronounced “Blessed,”—not the great, or rich, or powerful, or learned,—but the meek, the mourner, the poor in spirit, the persecuted, him that had no helper! Hence, groups composed of every diversity of character tracked His footsteps and hailed in Him a friend. Stern, strong men like Peter; intellectual, thoughtful men like Thomas; loving and meditative men like John. Penitence crept unabashed to His feet, and bathed them confidingly with tears. Sorrow came with sobbing heart and speechless emotion to be comforted. The poor came with their tale of long-endured misery. Infancy came stretching out its tiny arm, and smiled delighted in His embrace. While He rejoiced with them that rejoiced, He wept with them that wept. The fainting multitudes moved Him to compassion; the one suppliant in the crowd who touched His garment-hem, arrested His steps and evoked His mercy. Every weary, wandering bird, with drooping pinion, seemed to come and perch on the thick branches of this gracious Palm of Elim—this mighty Cedar of God. Beautifully has it been said: “In His heart Mercy may be said to have held her court: Holiness could dispense with an Ark and Tables to hold her laws; for in His life its enshrined glory was made so transparent, that even demons confessed Him to be the Holy One of God.”

Believer, you who perchance may be fainting under life’s burden and heat, come and anew take refuge in the contemplation of the perfect Manhood of the adorable Son of God! Delight often to think of Him as a partaker of

your nature. Though He has been well described, "as the One only true and perfect flower which has ever unfolded itself out of the root and stalk of humanity," yet it was a real—a *veritable* humanity. It is because they come welling from the depths of a *human* heart—because their music vibrates on a *human* lip—that the words are so unspeakably tender, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Those who are thus buffeting the storm, exposed to the sirocco blast of the desert, battling with care, harassed with anxiety, prostrated with bereavement, stricken with conscious guilt, longing for safe rest and deliverance from earth's sins and sorrows:—can understand the deep meaning of the central words in the importunate prayer of blind Bartimeus at the gate of Jericho—"Jesus, *Thou Son of David* (*Thou Elder Brother*), have mercy on me!" It will be from glorified *human* lips, too, the welcome will at last be given—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom."

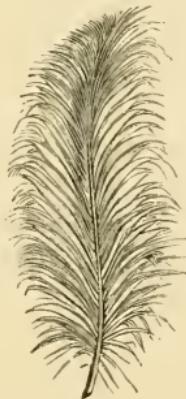
" His the descent from everlasting bliss,
In manger born, to raise us up on high ;
A woe-worn Pilgrim in earth's wilderness,
Wedding our finite dust with Deity.

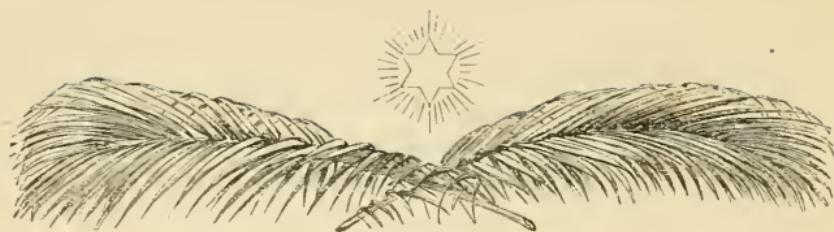
" Around His path no blazoned banners wave,
No jewelled diadem His brows adorned,
His cradle borrowed, and a borrowed grave,
Servant of servants, poor, despised, and scorned.

• • • • •
" Thus was He more than Brother unto all,
The poor, the lost, the burdened, the oppressed ;
Not one excluded from the gracious call,
' Come unto Me, ye weary, and have rest ! '

“ Peace for the guilty, stung with conscious sin,
Peace for bereaved ones, wailing for their dead,
Peace amid waves without and storms within,
The troubled soothed, the mourner comforted.”

“ IN ALL THINGS IT BEHOVED HIM TO BE MADE LIKE UNTO HIS
BRETHREN, THAT HE MIGHT BE A MERCIFUL AND
FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST.”





XXXVI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

—REV. iii. 19.

**The Rebukes
of Love.** WHAT ! speak of rest and refreshment when, it may be, the ringing sound of the axe is heard amid cherished earthly palm-groves all around, and the sands are strewn with lopped branches and scattered leaves ! Yes. It is even so. “The wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more ! But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him ” (Ps. ciii. 16, 17).

The words of our motto-verse, too, observe, were spoken, not by the lips of Christ the Sufferer on earth, but by the glorified lips of Christ the Exalted King. They are whisperings of the Heavenly Palm, which come wafted to us from the groves of Paradise.

“ No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous ! ” The divine dispensations are often incomprehensible. Jehovah’s name to His people is at times that which He gave to Manoah—“ Wonderful,” “ Secret,” “ Mysterious.” That wearing sickness, that wasting heritage of pain, these long tossings on a fevered, sleepless pillow ; where can there be love or mercy there ? But the silence

and loneliness of the sickbed is the figurative “wilderness,” whither He “allures” that He may “speak comfortably unto them, and give them their vineyards from thence” (*Hosea ii. 14, 15*) ; rousing them from the low dream of earth, from the sordid and the secular, from busy care and debasing solicitude, to the divine and the heavenly. Or, that unexpected heritage of penury—the crash of earthly fortune, the forfeiture of earthly gain, the stripping the walls of cherished and familiar treasure, and sending those nursed in the lap of luxury penniless on the world—where is there mercy or love here? But it is through this salutary though rough discipline that He weans from the enervating influence of prosperity, leading them to exchange the mess of earthly pottage for the bread of life, perishable substance for the fine gold of heavenly gain and durable riches. Or, that cruel blighting of young hope and pure affection—the withering of some cherished Elim-palm; the opening of early graves for the loving and beloved ; holiest ties formed, but the memory of which is all that remains; where is there kindness and mercy in creating bonds only to sever them, raising up friends only to bury them? The plaintive experience and utterance of the lone mother in Israel is that of many—“Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me” (*Ruth i. 20*). But the rills are dried by Him in order to lead to the great Fountainhead ; the links of earthly affection are broken, in order that stronger and more enduring ones may be formed above ; the rents have been made in the house of clay, only to render more inviting “the building of God—the house not made with hands ;” stimulating to live more for that world where all is perfection, where we shall stand “without fault before the throne.” A writer notes, that migratory birds are carried high by contrary winds, and that, by being

so carried, their flight is assisted. So is it with trial. "The wind is contrary," but it impels to an upward and a Godward flight. As it is often in the cloudy and rainy day that the mountains look near us, so often in the soul's gloomiest seasons the hills of God are brought nighest. *Tribulation* is the first link in the Apostle's golden chain. Dr. Trench, in his "Study of Words," tells us that "*tribulation*" is derived from the Latin *tribulum*, which was the machine by which the grain was sifted. Tribulation is the process of sifting, by which God clears away the chaff and the golden grain is retained. See, too, the gracious result of this sifting process. 'Tribulation,' to use the comment of an earnest speaker in applying the reference, 'worketh, what? We might have expected the natural result, 'impatience.' It is the reverse; by the imparted grace of Him in whose hands the *tribulum* is, "tribulation worketh *patience*'" (Rom. v. 3).

Suffering Christian, you may well trust Him who uttered the startling saying which heads this meditation—who gave the mightiest pledge of love He *could* give, by giving His own life,—that there is some all-wise "needs be" in the trials He has laid upon you. They are designed to bring you nearer Himself. They are His own appointed gateways, opening up and admitting to great spiritual blessings. Be assured the day will come, when these mysteries in your present lot will extract nothing from your lips but grateful praise; when you shall joyfully testify—'Had it not been for these wilderness experiences; that protracted sickness, that loss of worldly position, the death of that cherished relative or friend, I would still have been clinging to earth as my portion, content with the polluted rill and the broken cistern, instead of drawing water out of the wells of salvation.'

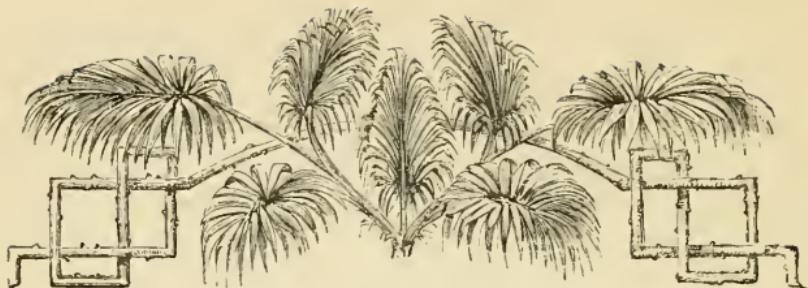
An earthly father often manifests a false leniency by never tendering the needful rebuke which, timeously given, might

have averted many a bitter life-sorrow. God rebukes and chastens just *because* He loves ; and never is His love *more* tender than when the rod is in His hand and the rebuke on His lips. The rebukes of an earthly father are often mistimed ; the result, it may be, of passion or caprice. "They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. xii. 10). These withered branches, stripped from some favourite grove in the valley, may yet, afflicted one, form, in your case, the imagery of that sublime picture of the future, where the sainted multitude in the upper sanctuary are seen "clothed with white robes and *palm*s in their hands."

God our Maker, God the Almighty Chastener, is said to give "songs in the night." The birds of earth which "sing among the branches" are silent save in the day ; but the boughs of these Elim-palms seem most alive with melody in hours of darkness. In the gloom of sorrow, their fronds may appear only to be dripping with rain, when they are in truth laden with the night-distilled dews of heaven !

" How could a moment's pang destroy
 My heart's confirmed repose in Thee ?
 Thy presence is sufficient joy
 To one reclaimed and spared like me.
 It is enough that I am thine,
 Almighty to redeem from sin ;
 Thou shalt subdue, correct, refine
 The soul which Thou hast died to win.
 I see the desolated ground
 With dews of heavenly kindness fed,
 And fruits of joy and love surround
 The heart which Thou hast comforted."

" NOW NO CHASTENING FOR THE PRESENT SEEMETH TO BE JOYOUS,
 BUT GRIEVOUS : NEVERTHELESS AFTERWARD IT YIELDETH
 THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS."



XXXVII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii. 16.

The Unspeakable Gift.

THERE is nothing in this world which is not a gift of God. Every palm-tree in the grove of created comforts and blessings:—every morsel of the bread which perisheth; the sunlight which gladdens us; the atmospheric air which sustains us; the fuel garnered deep down in earth's store-houses to warm us; the succession of seasons; the living streams which fertilise our fields; the waving harvests which crown the year with their plenty; the thousand tints of loveliness and beauty in garden, and dell, and forest; far more, the blessings which rejoice and consecrate social life—the Elim-palms and Elim-fountains of gladness in our domestic circles; these are severally and collectively “gifts of God.” “Every good and perfect gift is from above.” And they are gifts and pledges, too, of *love*.

“ God’s world has one great echo;
Whether calm blue mists are curled,
Or lingering dewdrops quiver,
Or red storms are unfurled;
The same deep love is throbbing
Through the great heart of God’s world.”

But what are these to the boon here pre-eminently spoken of—the Gift of gifts, “the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden”? a boon whose magnitude transcends all thought and illustration—the Son of the Highest to become ‘of human Virgin born,’ the Babe of Bethlehem’s lowly cradle; the God of Eternity condescending to be a pilgrim on life’s highway,—the great Leader of His spiritual Israel, with the rod of grace and power in His hand, with which to open living streams for the lost and perishing? “God so loved the world (and who can fathom or exhaust the meaning of that ‘so’?) that He gave His only-begotten Son.” God’s “Gift”—it was, unpurchasable by money,—the unmerited benefaction of Heaven:—free as the desert palm to the fainting pilgrim, who has only to repair under it for shade —free as the desert pool to the thirsty wayfarer, who has only to stoop at its margin and drink!

And this greatest and mightiest Gift, moreover, consecrates and sanctifies each minor one. As the sun glorifies with his radiance the tamest landscape, and transmutes the barren rock into a pyramid of gold; so are all earthly blessings glorified, beautified, sublimated, by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Christ has been well likened to the numeral, which, put before the unmeaning ciphers, invests them with peerless and untold preciousness. The very outer world of nature wears a new aspect when seen through eyes spiritually enlightened. Earthly discipline has a new meaning; and when subordinate comforts are blighted, or diminished, or withdrawn, there is ever the imperishable Gift remaining, beyond the reach of vicissitude; so that we can say, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet

I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

While feelingly alive to God's goodness in His diverse other mercies, can we heartily join in the transcendant estimate of the Apostle—"Thanks be unto God for His *unspeakable Gift!*" Truly, with this Gift, "having nothing," we "possess all things." In Christ's glorified person, as the God-Man Mediator, "all fulness dwells." No other earthly boon, no other trees in the palm-grove, can compensate for the want of this. But under the shade of these sheltering fronds, whate'er else may be denied us, we can say in the words of the Sacred Minstrel, "Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee!"

"Bounteous Giver! to besfriend me
None I have compared with Thee,
None so able to defend me;
Thou art all in all to me.

"What is life? a scene of troubles,
Following swiftly, one by one;
Phantom visions—airy bubbles,
Which appear, and then are gone.

"What at best the world's vain fashion?
Quickly it must pass away,
Vexing care and whirlwind passion
Surging like the angry spray.

"Friends may fail, and bonds may sever,
Cherished refuges may fall,
But Thy friendship is for ever—
It survives the wreck of all."

"HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT WITH HIM ALSO FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?"



XXXVIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"The Lord will provide."—GEN. xxii. 14.

Jeḥovah THE Elim-palms only environed Israel's temporary resting-place,—marked one of the many **Dirch.** wilderness camping-grounds on the way to Canaan. In the very next words after the recorded tent-pitching by the twelve wells, we read, “And they took their journey from Elim” (Ex. xvi. 1).

If “Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest,” be the watchword for all God’s pilgrims still, what, it may be asked, of the untrodden journey? What of to-morrow’s march? What of the unknown future?

“The Lord will provide!” That future is in the keeping of the God of the pillar-cloud, and we may well leave it there. These refreshing palm-groves at one encampment may well be taken as pledges of His faithfulness and loving care, till the last stage of the wilderness journey be reached, and ‘the fields of living green’ appear in view.

How beautiful the impress of the Divine hand in the works of outer nature. Every blade of grass, every forest leaf, how perfect, in symmetry of form, and in tenderness

of colour ! With what exquisite grace He has pencilled every flower, delicately poised it on its stalk, or spread a pillow for its head on the tender sod ! The God who has “so clothed the grass of the field,” will not be unmindful of the lowliest of His covenant family.

It is for us to say, as we lie passive in His hands, “Undertake Thou for me !” He portioning out for us as He sees meet, and having His own infinite reasons for what may appear perplexing to us :—we, with an unquestioning and unreasoning faith, fully trusting His power, tenderness, vigilance, love. He does not *consult* our short-sighted wisdom in what He does. The clouds do not consult the earth as to when they shall visit its fruits and flowers—its corn-fields and forests, with their watery treasures. The pining plant does not dictate to the firmament-reservoirs as to when they shall unseal their hidden stores. These give a kindly and needful supply “in due season,” and the earth has never yet (for six thousand years) had to complain of them as niggard almoners of their Creator’s bounty. So it is with the soul : He who maketh the clouds His chariot—who opens and shuts at will the windows of heaven—locking and unlocking the fountains of the great deep—says to all His people, ‘Trust Me ; I will give you all needed present blessings ; “I will come unto you as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth.” I do not pledge myself as to *how* or *when* the rain shall fall—but “I will cause the shower to come down in his season : there shall be showers of blessing.”’

Happy for us, if we are able to respond with an avowal of entire confidence in a present, personal God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being ! Behold the sun of the natural heavens, the great central luminary—a dumb insensate mass of matter—holding its dependent planets in

their orbits, controlling their unerring movements ; they, in calm, silent submission, yielding obedience to the will of this sovereign lord ! How much more may *we* hold on our way in the orbit of undeviating obedience, exulting in Jehovah's ever-present power and love ; so that in the remotest solitude, as well as the densest crowd, we can say, 'Alone, yet not alone, for my Father is with me !'

And if *we* thus confide in God, He will confide in us. Beautiful are the words of the prophet, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness ; those that remember Thee in Thy ways." Those that remember Thee and confide in Thee, "*Thou meetest them !*" The Lord comes out half-way to meet the confiding heart.

Let us listen to the words of Him who spake as never man spake, "Take no thought" (that is to say, Be not over-anxious or over-careful) "for the morrow." That 'morrow' is in the hands of One boundless in His resources, infinite in His compassion. He not only apportions the lot of His people, but He moulds and adapts them for their lots and positions in life. Just as in outer nature He adapts the varied classes in the vegetable world for different climates. As the palm was the tree of the desert, the olive that of Palestine, the cedar, of Lebanon, so is it with every tree of righteousness. They too are "*the planting of the Lord ;*" and wherever planted, there, in their varied ways, they may 'glorify' Him. Do not charge God with insincerity, when He declares, through His inspired Apostle, that all things work together for good to them that love Him. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If He leads you along a rough and thorny road, hear His loving voice thus reassuring your faith and lulling your misgivings, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of *all* these things.' He foresees and anticipates every

emergency that can overtake you. He can avert every danger, and disarm every foe. As you may be now surveying the yet-untrodden road, leading ‘uphill and downhill to the city of habitation,’ remember the words of Him who hath said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

“Leave, oh leave thy fond aspirings,
Bid thy restless heart be still ;
Cease, oh cease thy vain desirings,
Only seek thy Father’s will.
Leave behind thy faithless sorrow,
And thine every anxious care ;
He who only knows the morrow
Can for thee its burden bear.

Leave the darkness gathering o’er thee,
Leave the shadow land behind ;
Realms of glory lie before thee,
Enter in, and welcome find.”

“COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD ; TRUST ALSO IN HIM,
AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS.”





XXXIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains! Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light."

—Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6, 7, 9.

Glorious Attributes and Ways.

THESE verses sound like the rustling of many palm-leaves around the wells of the desert.

The King of Israel, himself a prince among pilgrims, when he wrote this psalm, was probably in the wilderness, not of Sinai, but of Judah;—nigh the Dead Sea, from the margin of whose waters wild cliffs rose to the height of 1500 feet. As he gazes up to the heavens, he sees written on their blue vault, "God is mercy," "God is love." He looks to the clouds as they gather, gradually dimming and darkening the azure; but he sees them spanned with the bow of "faithfulness." He looks to the mountains, their tops resting amid these clouds and rainbow-tints; and beholds them radiant with "justice,"—stable, immutable rectitude. He gazes down into the depths of the lake, sleeping at their

base, and reflecting their forms in its unruffled mirror. He sinks his plummet-line, but in vain ! It is unfathomable. "Thy judgments (Thy providential dealings) are "a great deep." Jehovah's righteousness, like the great mountains, is visible ; patent to the gaze. But His judgments are often like the lake beneath. Their unsounded mysteries lie beyond mortal ken, far down below ! Next (ver. 7), as a saint of God, he flees for refuge "under the shadow of the Almighty's wings :"—a beautiful emblem of security ; one used by the Saviour Himself, many centuries later, on the occasion of His weeping over Jerusalem—" How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." Then, he adds, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures ; *For with Thee is the fountain of life.*" Another figure still, perhaps, also suggested by a well-known fountain (Ain Jidy), which survives to this day in that desolate waste, amid the rocks of the wild goats, bursting from a shelf or cleft in the mountain :—" For with Thee," as it has been rendered, is the "spring of immortality" (Bishop Horsley);—"in Thy light shall we see light." He here speaks not of his present blessings, but of his future prospects. He looks forward, anticipating the time when all the past anomalies in God's moral government shall be explained. "We shall see light !" we shall behold Him, not in a glass, darkly ; not as now, "through the lattice ;" but "face to face :"—knowing experimentally the reality of His own divine beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The psalm begins with a minor note—"The transgression of the wicked" (ver. 1). It describes the pang with which the upright believer witnesses the unblushing iniquity and godlessness around him ;—speculative infidelity, practical

atheism,—the iniquity, the deceit, the “devising of mischief,” —hatching schemes of ambition and sin in their very beds : the world’s crooked policy, tortuous ways, and unprincipled ends. All this may well fill the righteous with painful solicitude and sadness. But he looks from man to God. He looks from this surging sea, vexed and disquieted by waves of human passion and discord, to the giant mountains of the Divine faithfulness towering grandly overhead. Dominating all, he sees the Divine *mercy* “in the heavens.” Jehovah’s mercy in Christ, as a Covenant God, is high above the great flood, and the great mountains and the great clouds.

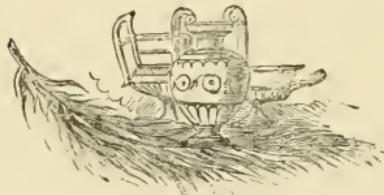
In this sublime contemplation he reposes. He knows—though at times “deep may call to deep ;” though these hill-tops be muffled in angry tempests, those heavens darkened with murky vapours ;—yet the day is coming—“the morning without clouds,” when all shall be made bright like “the clear shining after rain.” “Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” The impersonation of Justice, in the Greek and Roman mythology, with bandaged eyes and equally-balanced scales, was the faint image of a grander Verity. “He judgeth righteous judgment.” “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday !” “By faith,” says one who is now experiencing the sublime reality, “you are enabled to say ‘All is well !’ and if a voice could reach you from the Everlasting, would it not re-echo back, ‘All *is* well?’”

May this lofty psalm, of which these are the keynotes, be sung by us, not in the Church of earth alone, but in the Church of the first-born : when its beautiful and magnificent imagery will come to be truly fulfilled :—reposing

under the shadow of the Heavenly Palm, the shelter and covert of Jehovah's wings ; 'satisfied with the fatness of His house,' and 'drinking of the river of His pleasures ;' taking up, through all eternity, the joyous strain these opening words suggest,—“O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His *Mercy* endureth for ever !”

“Blessed day, which hastens fast,
End of conflict and of sin ;
Death itself shall die at last,
Heaven's eternal joys begin.
Then eternity shall prove,
God is Light, and God is Love !”

“O CONTINUE THY LOVING-KINDNESS UNTO THEM THAT
KNOW THEE ; AND THY RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE
UPRIGHT IN HEART.”





XL.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

*“Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and
will not tarry.”—HEB. x. 37.*

“Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.”
—REV. xvi. 15.

The Second Coming. THE Redeemer’s Advent ! a scriptural assurance full of rest and peace, but which can be felt and realised alone by those who are conscious of sitting now under His shadow as the true Heavenly Palm. In other words—the elevating prospect of the Saviour’s *second* coming in glory can be enjoyed alone by those who know, in their individual experience, the blessedness connected with a genuine and unswerving reliance on the *first* coming in humiliation. When the latter truth is fully appropriated and exulted in, no theme can prove more tranquillising or refreshing. “I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning ; I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Ps. cxxx. 5, 6).

The reference in the second of these motto-verses may be the simple and ordinary one, of a man, heedless of all danger, lying down to sleep with his garments carelessly

cast aside ; the thief suddenly enters his chamber, takes forcible possession of his clothing, and leaves him naked and defenceless. Or more probably, according to the commentator Lightfoot,* the allusion may be to a Jewish custom in the service of the Temple of Jerusalem. Twenty-four wards, or companies, were appointed night by night to guard the various entrances to the sacred courts. One individual was appointed as captain or ‘marshal’ over the others, called the “Man of the Mountain of the House of God.” His duty was to go round the various gates during the night to see that his subordinates were faithful at their posts. Preceded himself by men bearing torches, it was expected that each wakeful sentinel should hail his appearance with the password, “Thou man of the mountain of the house, peace be unto thee !” If through unwatchfulness and slumber this were neglected, the offender was beaten with the staff of office, his garments were burnt,—he was branded with shame for failure of duty. It was in contrast with these slumbering Levites, that the Lord of the Temple may be supposed to pronounce a blessing on His true people, who keep their garments, and are saved from reproach. Their attitude is that of wakeful sentinels, ever standing on their watchtower, pacing their rounds ; having on the whole armour of God, “the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” so that “being clothed, they may not be found naked” or “ashamed before Him at His coming.”

We repeat, that Second Advent of Christ *ought*, at least in the case of all His true people, to be regarded by its apostolic name as “*The Blessed Hope*,” the polar star in the sky of the future. It is true, indeed, that in one sense,

* Vol. I., p. 919.

to the believer, death is equivalent to the coming of his Lord, as being the hour which will usher him into His immediate presence. But death is never spoken of in Scripture as a ‘blessed hope.’ Even the Christian holds his breath as the King of terrors passes by. He may be ready to slip the cable whenever his Lord gives the word ; he may be ready to enter the dark valley, and under the guidance and grace of the Shepherd-Leader, he may fear no evil ; but it is a dark valley notwithstanding. The gloomy cypress, not the verdant palm ;—the tear and the sable mourning, have ever formed the associations and accompaniments of the final hour and scene. It is altogether different, however, with Christ’s Advent. That is a jubilant anticipation. The believer can long for it—can pray for it. “Make no tarrying, O my God.” “Make haste, my Beloved,” is his cry underneath this gracious palm-shadow —“be Thou like to a roe, or to a young hart on the mountains of spices !”

Nor let us suppose that this watching is some fantastic, transcendental frame of mind, which divorces the Christian from daily work and duty. These vigils may be best kept, not in cloistered seclusion. He watches most nobly and truly, who does so, not by abstracting himself from life’s rough drudgery and needful calls ; but who, in the midst of the ordinary avocations of the world, amid the fever and turmoil of busy existence, can catch up the joyous chimes wafted to the ear of faith from the bells of glory. To many such, the familiar words of the poet may be invested with a new significance as applied to the Second Coming :—

“ There are in this loud stunning tide
 Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
 Of th’ everlasting chime.”

Let these inspired utterances be ever ringing their varying magnificent melodies in our ears :—“ Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” “ I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” “ A little while, and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me.” “ The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” If we expected a long absent brother or friend from a distant land, how careful should we be in our preparations to give him welcome ! How house and hall would be lustrated and adorned ! How would ingenuity be taxed to deck out his chamber with every tribute which fond affection could devise ! How careful to efface every association or memory of sadness, and prevent the occurrence of one note of discord or disharmony that would mar the joy of that glad return ! How should it be with us in the prospect of welcoming the Brother of brothers ! How should the home of every heart be “ swept and garnished,” decked in best holiday attire, to give the long-absent Lord love’s most loyal welcome !

Every day is bringing that Advent nearer, lessening the span of that arc of promise. “ The little while and ye shall not see Me” is widening ; the “ little while and ye shall see Me” is diminishing. The Church is like the shipmen in the Sea of Adria, who “ deemed that they drew near to some country.” The historian of Columbus speaks thus of the great discoverer’s approach to the shores of the unknown New World :—“ The admiral gave orders that the sails should be close-reefed and the lead kept going, and that they should sail slowly, being afraid of shoals and breakers ; feeling certain that the first gleam of daybreak would discover land under their bows.” Is this true in a nobler sense of “ the Better Country ”? Are we thus on the

outlook to "see the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off"? Let each new month, new week, new day, each recurring providential dispensation add new power to the summons—"Awake, awake! put on thy beautiful garments!"—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." So that when the hour of the Second Advent shall strike, when "the Lord shall come, and all His saints with Him," we may be able rejoicingly to exclaim—"Lo ! this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." "*Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, WHEN HE COMETH, shall find watching!*"

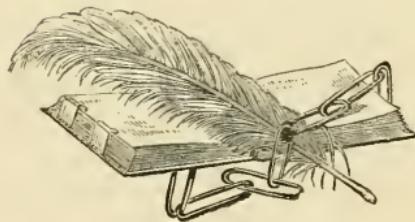
" It may be in the evening,
When the work of the day is done,
And you have time to sit in the twilight
And watch the sinking sun,
While the long bright day dies slowly
Over the sea,
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of ME !

" It may be when the midnight
Is heavy upon the land,
And the black waves lying dumbly
Along the sand ;
It may be at the cock-crow ;
When the valley-mists are shading
The river's chill,
When the morning star is fading,
Fading over the hill.
Let the door be on the latch
In your home ;
In the chill before the dawning,
Between the night and morning,
I may come !

“ It may be in the morning
 When the sun is bright and strong,
 And the dew is gleaming beauteous,
 The meadow slopes among,
 When the waves are laughing loudly
 By the shore ;
 And the birds are singing sweetly
 By your door.
 It may be in the morning
 I will come !

“ A gentle shadow fell across
 The window of my room ;
 While working my appointed task,
 I calmly turned me round to ask,
 ‘ Is He come ? ’
 An angel whispered sweetly
 In my ear :
 ‘ Lift up your head rejoicing—
 HE IS HERE ! ’ ”

“ EVEN SO ! COME, LORD JESUS ! COME QUICKLY ! ”





XLI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things."—PHIL. iii. 8.

Emptied Righteousness. "THE loss of all things" bringing with it rest—tranquillity ! This seems a contradiction in terms. Worldly loss generally, and as an almost necessary consequence, leads to dispeace, unquiet, trouble. Yet in Paul's case it was sublimely true ;—the surrender of former grounds and subjects for exultation and boasting led him to the truest, to the only stable rest. We are reminded of another of his seeming paradoxes : " Having nothing, yet possessing all things."

We may readily believe, indeed, that it would be no small effort for him to discard what he once so fondly loved and prized, and to which he so proudly clung. Sad to go to that gallery of pleasant pictures which he himself had hung in the chambers of his soul, and with his own hand to wrench one by one from its place ;—to tear sculpture by sculpture from niche and pedestal, and to write upon these walls, so lately gleaming with fancied righteousness, "*All loss for Christ!*" In the words of the entire passage, he has undoubtedly reference to that wild night in the Sea of

Adria, to which in former pages we have incidentally referred, when pursuing his voyage to Rome in the Alexandrian corn-ship. The tempest was threatening ; the safety of the ship seemed to demand a lightening of the cargo. But that precious corn ! must it be sacrificed for the safety of the vessel ? It was “gain ;” but must it come to be reckoned as “loss,” and tossed overboard ? Yes, the tempest decides the question. It must be consigned to the waves, otherwise the vessel will founder. There is no room for debate ; the crew make up their minds to “suffer the loss of all.” Nay more, when the tempest howls with greater fury, and danger and death stare them full in the face, they go a step further. The “loss” is never thought of. They do not now pause in uncertainty and indecision, saying, ‘ Cannot we spare these precious barrels of merchandise ? ’ Imminent danger makes them glad to plunge them into the roaring sea. When the question is between the loss of the wheat, and the loss of the ship, there can be no hesitation. They account them as absolutely worthless—of no value. They are glad to see them pitching against one another in the dark abyss. They look upon them now, not as gain or treasure, but as having proved an absolute hindrance, endangering their safety.

And this was the process in St. Paul’s mind. First, there was a clinging to all these birthright gains and self-righteous confidences. He was loath to part with them. Secondly, he underwent the “loss,” but it was accompanied with “suffering.” It was a violent effort for him to renounce that which he had once so fondly treasured and trusted in. But the third stage of feeling was when he was brought to say, ‘ *I hate* them all ! they are as dung : they are worthless : they are imperilling the vessel’s safety ;

they are endangering my soul's interest; let them go, every one of them! They were once "gain to me;" once I endured "suffering" at the thought of losing them; but now, heave them into the raging sea. I count them as refuse, sweepings, husks, "that I may win Christ, and be found in Him."

Is this our case? Can we, as voyagers on the sea of life, make such a protestation, that all in which we once trusted and gloried, as a ground of justification in the sight of God, we toss overboard, in order that the giant deed of Christ's doing and dying may stand out alone in solitary grandeur? "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

"Accepted in the Beloved," says Hedley Vicars, as he writes on a gun carriage in the trenches before Sebastopol; "What a healing balm is there here, for a weary, heavy-laden sinner!"

And if being clothed in the imputed righteousness of Immanuel be a blessed truth to live on, what a blessed truth to die on! What a joyous garment this, wherewith to wrap us round when the billows are high, and we are plunging into Jordan! We can imagine, when that solemn hour arrives; when, perhaps suddenly, we are laid on the pillow from which we are to rise no more; and when, despite of our well-grounded confidence in the Gospel, gloomy visions and memories of former guilt *will* gather around, filling us with trembling and dismay,—oh! in the midst of the thick darkness, to feel girded with a panoply, which the rush of waters cannot penetrate, and of which the King of terrors cannot despoil us—the robe which we received at the cross, and which we are to wear before the throne!

Yes, children of God, of every age and rank and experience, tune your hearts and lips for the joyous strain. Aged believers, sing it ! ye whose earthly, pilgrim-garments are soiled and travel-worn, but whose robe of righteousness is fresh as in the day of your espousals with the Heavenly Bridegroom. Young believers, sing it ! ye who may have but recently stood at the marriage-altar with your Lord, and received at His hands the glistering vesture ; who may have a long journey, it may be, still to traverse, ere you reach the King's Palace. Sorrowing believers, sing it ! take down your harps from the willows of sadness. Ye are in mourning attire ; but through your weeds there shines this "clothing of wrought gold," which the shadows of death and the grave cannot dim or alloy. Let the whole Church of the living God, divided on other themes,—mute with other songs,—kindle into holy rapture with this—

" Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Mid flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy I shall lift up my head.

• • • • •
" This spotless robe the same appears
When ruin'd nature sinks in years ;
No age can change its glorious hue—
The robe of Christ is ever new.

" And when the dead shall hear Thy voice,
And all Thy banish'd ones rejoice,
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,—
JESUS THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS !"

"TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE, WHEREIN HE
HATH MADE US ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."



XLII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

—HEB. xiii. 8.

Christ ever WE may well sit under this shadow of the
Beloved with great delight.
the same.

Human life, outwardly, inwardly, is a “shifting spectacle ;” so says the apostle of it. He compares it to the moving scenes or characters in the old Grecian theatre ;—“the fashion” (or the *drama*) “of this world passeth away.” Over the “yesterday” of the past, and the “to-day” of the present, the clouds of heaven are chasing one another. The waves of its seething, restless sea, are tossing and tumbling in fretful disquietude. And whether these changes have been from prosperity to adversity, or adversity to prosperity ; converting life, with some, into a golden viaduct, with others, into “a bridge of sighs,” they conduct alike to the one final goal. The path of sorrow as well as the path of glory “leads but to the grave.”

Believer, amid the fitfulness and uncertainty of earth and earthly things, come and seat yourself under this verdant Palm of a Saviour’s unchanging faithfulness. “Trust not in man, nor in the son of man, in whom is no stay.” It

may be, that some who read these pages may have had, or may be even now having, painful personal proof of that mutability and uncertainty, that evanescence and transitoriness. You may have felt by experience, how often those joys, which like the bright berries in the summer woods are beautiful to the eye, prove bitter to the taste ; how often the loveliest cloud in the life-sky condenses at last into a shower and then falls ; how the loveliest rainbow-hue dissolves ; how riches take to themselves wings and flee away ; capricious fortune forsaking, often just when the golden dream seems most surely realised !

But “HE hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Have you never observed, that while, in the course of a long succession of years, the scenery on a river’s bank may be changed, the river itself remains the same ? Formerly it was wont, it may be, to flow through sequestered woods :—its waters, murmuring by forest glades, where the wild deer stole down in the silent eve undisturbed by human step. Now hives of industry are lining its course. Ponderous wheels are revolving and the clang of hammers are resounding, where the woodman’s axe alone was erewhile heard. But the river itself, unchanged and unchangeable, carries its unfailing tributary-torrent to the main. So it is with Him who, as “the River of God which is full of water,” rolls its own glorious volume of everlasting love. “There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved !” “Behold,” says the same Immutable One, in another metaphor, “I have graven thee on the palms of Mine hands.” Not on the mountains, colossal as they are, for they shall depart ; on no leaf of Nature’s vast volume, for the last fires shall scorch them ; not on blazing sun, for

he shall grow dim with age; or on glorious heavens, for they shall be folded together as a scroll. But on the hand which made the worlds, the hand which was transfixed on Calvary, the hand of might and love,—I have graven thee there. No corroding power can efface the writing, obliterate the name ;—thou art Mine now, and Mine for ever ! The travellers come and go in the desert,—the canvas tent erected to-day, is down to-morrow, but the sheltering palms remain. The great Apostle speaks of ‘tribulation’—‘distress’—‘persecution’—‘famine,’ and other adverse forces as so many waves dashing against *The Rock*—trying to “separate,”—gathering their united strength to sweep from the secure shelter. But in vain. They are beaten back in succession with Faith’s challenge,—the reproof, not of bold overweening presumption, but of lowly believing confidence and heavenly trust—“In the name of a Mightier, we bid defiance to your might !” ‘Who shall separate us?’ “I stand upon a Rock,” says Chrysostom, “let the sea rage, the Rock cannot be disturbed.”

Bereaved Christian, you who have been called more specially to experience the sorrows of life; how consolatory to know that there is One prop that cannot give way, One Friend beyond the reach of vicissitude, who is working out your soul’s everlasting wellbeing in His own calm world, far above and beyond the heavings and convulsions of ours. One who is the same amid storm and sunshine, births and deaths, marriage peals and funeral knells : of whom you can say, amid the wreck of all human confidences, “They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure !”

“ ‘This same Jesus !’ Oh how sweetly
Fall those words upon the ear,
Like a swell of far-off music
In a nightwatch still and drear.

“ He who spake as none had spoken,
Angel wisdom far above,
All forgiving, ne'er upbraiding,
Full of tenderness and love.

“ For this word, O Lord, we bless Thee,
Bless our Master's changeless name ;
‘ Yesterday, to-day, for ever,
Jesus Christ is still the same.’ ”

“ TRUST IN THE LORD FOR EVER, FOR IN THE LORD JEHOVAH IS
(MARG.) THE ROCK OF AGES.”





XLIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“Thou art my portion, O Lord.”—Ps. cxix. 57.

The Soul's Portion. God is the only true and satisfying portion of the spirit ;—the realised *pleroma* of the old Platonists, for which earthly schools and systems of philosophy groped in hopeless quest. The soul, dowered with immortality, altogether fails to have its longings and aspirations satisfied with the seen and the temporal ; as little as the Israelite, in the desert of the wandering, would have been satisfied with burning patches of unsheltered sand for his camping ground, as compared with the twelve refreshing fountains of Elim with their threescore encircling palms. Too truthful and suggestive is the symbolic truth conveyed by a painter in an allegorical picture of human life ; —children in a churchyard, sporting with soap-bubbles by the side of an opened grave ! The bubbles are beauteous, —lustrous with rainbow tints ; but, one by one, they burst, some in the air, others as they touch the fringing grass ; the vapoury moisture of all falling into that dark hollow at their feet. The world's sceptic poet thus warbles in plaintive monotone—

“ I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home to rest ;
A balm for the sickness of care,
A bliss for a bosom unblest.”

We repeat, the only repose of the soul is in *God*. You cannot detain the eagle in the forest. You may gather around him a chorus of choicest birds ;—you may give him a perch on the goodliest pine ;—you may charge winged messengers to bring him choicest dainties ;—but he will spurn them all. Spreading his lordly wings, and, with his eye on the Alpine cliff, he will soar away to his own ancestral halls amid the munitions of rocks and the wild music of tempest and waterfall ! The heart of man, in its eagle soarings, will rest with nothing short of the Rock of Ages. Its ancestral halls are the halls of Heaven. Its munitions of rocks are the attributes of God. The sweep of its majestic flight is Eternity ! “ Lord, THOU hast been our dwelling-place in all generations ! ”

“ Once,” says a gifted American writer, “ I looked across a landscape in a season of great drought, and all the elms looked sickly and yellow, as if verging to decay. But one elm was fresh and green, as if spring showers were hourly falling upon it. Coming nearer to observe, behold ! a silent river flowed at the foot of the tree, and its roots stretched far out into its living waters. So is he, in the drought and heat of this earth, whose soul is rooted in God.”

The world has its joys and its portions too, and we do not affirm that they are devoid of attractiveness. Had this been the case, they would not be so fondly and eagerly clung to as they are. But this we can affirm, that while they are certain, sooner or later to perish, they are fitful and capricious even while they last. They are sand-built, not rock-built. They are, at best, but the passing gleam of

the meteor ; not like the Christian's happiness, the steady lustre of the true constellation. On a deathbed, one memory of triumph over sin and of successfully-resisted temptation will outbid and outpeer them all. Yes, the joys of the true believer survive all others. Religion is like a castle on a mountain summit, catching the earliest sunbeam, and gilded by the last evening ray. When low down in the world's valleys, the shadows are falling and the lights are already in the windows, the radiance still tarries on these lofty peaks of gladness. That castle, moreover, is full of all manner of store. God has furnished it with every attractive blessing that can invite the weary wanderer in. He has crowded it with love-tokens, wherewith He may welcome back His long-absent children ;—just as a mother (to use again a recent illustration) decks out her room for the welcome of her absent boy. As every available nook is crowded with souvenirs of affection, so God has filled that castle with love-pledges. Its walls are tapestried with proofs and promises of His grace and love in Jesus.

And having found God in Christ and Christ in God as our soul's all-sufficient portion, let us dread everything that would lead us away from Him, and forfeit the possession of the Divine favour and regard. It is the short but touching epitaph seen in the catacombs at Rome, and we can annex to it another meaning besides its reference to death ;—“*In Christo, in pace*”—(“*In Christ, in peace*”). With Him as our covenant-possession we are independent of all others. “If He giveth quietness (rest), who can make trouble?” It is a peace which the world, with all its riches, cannot give, and which the world, with all its sorrows and its trials, cannot take away. “In the world,” says Jesus, “ye shall have tribulation, but in *Me* ye shall have peace.”

Blessed Saviour, to whom can I go but unto Thee? The

wandering sheep may turn scornfully from its restoring shepherd; the eagle may cling to its ignoble cage, and despise its rocky fastnesses; the prodigal may mock a parent's entreaties, and recklessly cleave to his alien home and beggar's fare; the parched pilgrim may turn with averted head from the gushing stream; but Thou alone the unfailing Portion, Thou alone the unvarying Friend, let me never be guilty of the ingratitude of forgetting or forsaking Thee! "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

" Let me Thy power, Thy beauty see,
 So shall my vain aspirings cease,
 And my free heart shall follow Thee
 Through paths of everlasting peace.
 My strength, Thy gift, my life, Thy care,
 I shall forget to seek elsewhere
 The joy to which my soul is heir."

" WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE? AND THERE IS NONE UPON EARTH THAT I DESIRE BESIDE THEE."





XLIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Let Israel hope in the Lord."—Ps. cxxx. 7.

Hope. HOPE opens its bright vista-view through the Elim palms—the morning dew-drops drenching their fronds and sparkling with diamond lustre in the rising sun!

“Hope! Who is insensible to the music of that word? What bosom has not kindled under its utterance? Poetry has sung of it, music has warbled it, oratory has lavished on it its bewitching strains. Pagan mythology, in her vain but beautiful dreams, said that when all other divinities fled from the world, *Hope*, with her elastic step and radiant countenance and lustrous attire, lingered behind. The weeping Hebrews, in the day of their exile, did not unstring the harps of Zion or break them to pieces. No; they hung them, tuneless indeed and mute, but still unmutilated, on the willowed banks of the streams of Babylon. Why? because *Hope* cheered them with the thought that these silent melodies would once more awake, when God, in His own good time, would “turn again their captivity as streams in the south.” *Hope!* well may we personify thee lighting up thy altar-fires in this dark world, and dropping a

live coal into many a desolate heart ; gladdening the sick-chamber with visions of returning health ; illuminating with rays brighter than the sunbeam the captive's cell ; crowding the broken slumbers of the soldier, by his bivouac-fire, with pictures of his sunny home and his own joyous return. *Hope!* drying the tear on the cheek of woe ; as the black clouds of sorrow break and fall to the earth, arching the descending drops with thine own beauteous rainbow ! Ay, more, standing with thy lamp in hand by the gloomy realms of Hades, kindling thy torch at Nature's funeral pile, and opening vistas through the gates of glory ! Beautifully says a gifted writer of the sister country :—

“ Where'er my paths
On earth shall lead, I'll keep a nesting-bough
For Hope—the song-bird, and, with cheerful step,
Hold on my pilgrimage, remembering where
Flowers have no autumn-languor, Eden's gate
No flaming sword to guard the tree of life.”

Yes, if Hope, even with reference to present and finite things, be an emotion so joyous ; if uninspired poetry can sing so sweetly of its delights, what must be the *believer's* hope, the hope which has God for its object and heaven for its consummation ? “ I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I HOPE.” “ Let Israel HOPE in the Lord.”

This lofty grace, indeed, at times, requires stern discipline to develop its noble proportions. It is often the child of tribulation. The apostle traces its pedigree, “ *Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience HOPE* ” (Rom. v. 3, 4). It would appear as if (recurring to the figure already employed), like the rainbow in the natural heavens, Hope specially loves to span the moral

firmament with its triumphal arch, in the cloud of tribulation.

But, heaven-born, it is heaven-ward, too, in its aspiration. It is generally represented by the sculptor's chisel as a beautiful female form, with wings ready to be extended in flight. The safety of the timid bird is to be on the wing. If its haunt be near the ground—if it fly low—it exposes itself to the fowler's net or snare. If we remain grovelling on the low ground of feeling and emotion, we shall find ourselves entangled in a thousand meshes of doubt and despondency, temptation and unbelief. “But surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of *that which hath a wing*” (Prov. i. 17; marginal reading). “They that wait (*or hope*) in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles” (Isa. xl. 31). “I will *hope* continually,” says David, “and will yet praise Thee more and more” (Ps. lxxi. 14). Again using a kindred emblem—the bird in the tempest rushing for shelter under the mother's wing—“Thou hast *been* my help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice” (Ps. lxiii. 7). The Believer is a “prisoner,” but a “prisoner of hope.” The gospel is a “gospel of hope.” Its message is called “the good hope through grace.” The “helmet of salvation” is the helmet of *hope*. The “anchor of the soul” is the anchor of *hope*. The believer “rejoices in *hope*.” Christ is in him “the *hope* of glory.” *Hope* peoples to him the battlements of heaven with sainted ones in the spirit-land. He “sorrows not as others, who have *no hope*.” When death comes, *Hope* cheers the final hour;—“Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee.” *Hope* stands with her torch over his grave, and in the prospect of the dust returning to its dust, he says, “My flesh shall rest in *hope*.” *Hope* is one of the three

guardian graces that conduct him to the heavenly gate. Now abideth these three, "Faith, *Hope*, and Love;" and if it be added, "the greatest of these is Love," it is because Hope and her companion finish their mission at the celestial portal! They proceed no further; they go back to the world, to the wrestlers in the earthly conflict. Faith returns to her drooping hearts, to undo heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free. Hope goes to her dungeon vaults, her beds of sickness, her chambers of bereavement and sorrow. To take Faith or Hope to heaven, would be to take the physician to the sound man, or to offer crutches to the strong, or to help to light the meridian sun with a tiny candle; Faith is then changed to sight, and Hope to full fruition. *Love* alone holds on her infinite mission. *Faith* and *Hope* are her two soaring pinions. She drops them as she enters the gates of glory. The watcher puts out his beacon when the sun floods the ocean; the miner puts out his lamp when he ascends to the earth. *Hope's* taper light is unneeded in that world where "the sun shall no more go down, neither for brightness shall the moon withdraw itself, but where the Lord our God shall be an everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended."

" I dwell here in content,
Thankful for tranquil days;
And yet my eyes grow dim,
As still I gaze and gaze
Upon a mountain pass
That leads—or so it seems—
To some far happier land
Beyond the world of dreams."

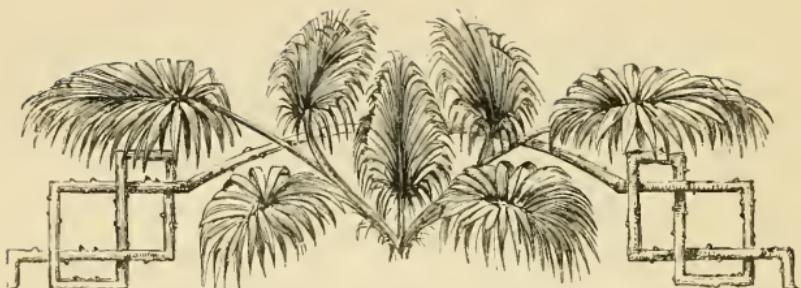
" On we haste, to home invited,
There with friends to be united

In a surer bond than here :
Meeting soon, and met for ever !
Glorious HOPE ! forsake us never,
For thy glimmering light is dear.

“ Ah, the way is shining clearer,
As we journey ever nearer
To the everlasting Home.
Friends who there await our landing,
Comrades, round the throne now standing,
We salute you, and we come ! ”

“ NOW THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND
PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YE MAY ABOUND
IN HOPE THROUGH THE POWER OF
THE HOLY GHOST.”





XLV.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“**Zion!** Thy God reigneth.”—ISA. lii. 7.

“Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”

—PS. ii. 6.

The Supreme
Rule of Jesus.

GOD's gracious palm-trees of promise are not designed for comfort and refreshment to the individual believer alone. He has an outlook from under their grateful shade on the Church's far horizon. Delightful and elevating is that topic of consolation which our motto-verses suggest !

In the context from which the former of the two is taken, the prophet, in heavenly vision, beholds the swift-footed Gospel messengers speeding from country to country, from race to race, carrying the tidings of salvation round the globe. He sees a whole world brought under the beneficent reign of the Prince of Peace, and can exclaim (ver. 10)— “The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations ; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” The Church ceases not her efforts till every mountain and valley be gladdened with the feet of these evangelists, with trumpet-tongue proclaiming the behests of her Great King.

And what is the opening theme of those who are thus swift to act as His delegates? What is their brief watch-word for the children of Zion?—"THY GOD REIGNETH!" Happier, more blessed words there cannot be. *Messiah rules over His Church and over the nations.* "Yet have I set My King on My holy hill of Zion." What a comfort to the Church universal; that amid political complexities: it may be the prevalence and triumph of human tyranny and wrong; all which concerns her is under His omnipotent supervision; that He is controlling every event for her ultimate welfare. 'Kings and potentates,' says M'Cheyne, 'are only like Hiram's workmen in Lebanon cutting down trees to prepare a highway for the King's chariot.' 'The sacramental host,' His true people throughout all the world, need be in no trepidation—giving way like Israel in Egypt to precipitate panic; for in front and in reward they have an Almighty guardian. And especially His ministers, 'the armour-bearers of Jehovah,' need never fear the ultimate success of their proclamation of the good tidings; the issue of the conflict is in the Lord's hands. They can take as their battle-song the motto inscribed on the altar erected shortly after Israel left their Elim encampment, "*Jehovah Nissi*" ("The Lord is my banner").

And what is theme of encouragement to the Church universal, is equally so to each separate member of that Church. There are times, amid the mysteries of daily life—amidst startling providences—baffling dispensations, when the old moorings threaten to give way, or *have* momentarily given way, and we feel ourselves drifting out on the cheerless sea of human doubt and distrust. All is dark around;—no rift in the cloud, no star in the midnight sky,—and in the anguish of bitter unbelief we are tempted to mutter the querulous plaint, "Where is now my God?" Or, if that

God lives and reigns, does He live a God of terror? does He answer to the fire-god of the Phœnician in his Baal-worship, or to the Capitoline-Jupiter of the Roman, armed with the thunderbolt and forked lightning? or, in the phantasies of a later philosophy, has He abdicated His throne, and left man and his fortunes to wild chance, to be driven, things of fate, hither and thither on the fitful waters,—the vessel without a pilot, the world without a ruler?

No! the chart of Providence containing the fortunes of the nations, as well as all that concerns His Church and people, is in the keeping of the Christ of Calvary. “The Lord is King, . . . He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet” (*Prayer-Book version.*) It is He who mingles every drop in the cup, and lights every furnace, and orders every trial, and draws every tear. Oh! what would many have been in those gloomy hours of despair, when the props of existence were tottering underneath them—(what they thought were life’s strongholds giving way like the yielding rafters beneath their feet)—what would they have been, but for the sustaining assurance that that roll of human destiny is in the hand of the Lord who died for them?

Especially to the mourner in Zion, how cheering the assurance, that all which concerns him and his is under His Saviour’s control and sovereignty! On those gloomy, sterile mountains of trial, on which “every tree is burnt up, and all the green grass burnt up,” glad is this announcement, borne by the messengers of consolation. Other “good tidings of good” there are,—grander and more glorious gospel promises, embracing the hopes “full of immortality;” but how the soul, amid the ruins of its joy—the dust of its desolation, clings to this elementary truth, that it was no capricious accident or chance which overturned

its fondest fabrics, and made “the city sit solitary that was full of people ;” but that every form of outer calamity, fever and disease, lightning and tempest, plague, pestilence, and famine, are so many arrows in the quiver of God. “Zion ! thy God reigneth !”

We may not now, and do not now, see the wisdom and faithfulness of many of His dealings. Many an Elim of blessing may be mistaken for a Marah of bitterness and sorrow. We may even, at times, lose the footsteps of the Sovereign Ruler, and the cry of the smitten heart may be, “Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.” But the arm, for the present slumbering, will in due time “awake ;” the arm, now concealed, will in due time be “made bare ;” the purposes now hidden will be unfolded ; and each of the children of Zion will come to be “joyful in their King.”

“ Know well, my soul, God's hand controls
Whate'er thou fearest ;
Round Him in calmest music rolls
Whate'er thou hearest.

“ And that cloud itself, which now before thee
Lies dark in view,
Shall, with beams of light from the inner glory,
Be stricken through.”

“ FOR THE LORD SHALL COMFORT ZION : HE WILL COMFORT ALL HER WASTE PLACES ; AND HE WILL MAKE HER WILDERNESS LIKE EDEN, AND HER DESERT LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD.”



XLVI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

—MATT. xxviii. 20.

The Perpetual Presenee. WHAT can give rest, if the presence of an Almighty Saviour cannot ;—the habitually-felt shade of the Heavenly Palm ? Israel had but *one* Elim. Christ’s people have the Divine reality at each pausing place of the journey, till the last stage of all be reached ; and then, only to be ushered, from the partial glimpses of faith, into the full vision and fruition of glory !

When Jesus spake the words of our motto-verse, sorrow was filling the hearts of His disciples at the thought of His departure, when the most sacred of friendships seemed about to be dissolved for ever. But by one glorious promise He turns their sadness into joy. ‘I go,’ He seems to say, ‘and yet I will never leave you. These heavens are about to receive Me : but though My personal presence be withdrawn ; though this Risen body is soon to be screened from view behind the veiled glories of the Holiest of all, think not in reality I am gone—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world !”’

That farewell saying has lost none of its comfort. How delightful the contemplation ! the assurance of the upholding arm of a personal, living, loving Saviour ; susceptible of every human sympathy ; bending over us with His pitying eye ; entering with infinite tenderness into every earthly want and woe ; drawing nigh in all the dark experiences of life, as He did to the disciples on their midnight sea, and whispering the calming words, "It is I" (or rather, "I AM"), "be not afraid." 'I am the Living One ; I am the Controlling One (yes, and to "as many as I love") ; I am the rebuking One, and the chastening One !' Let us think of this, not as a cold abstraction, or beautiful phantasm, but as a glorious truth, a sublime and comforting verity. He is ever with us ! Amid sacred musings over departed friends, when visions of the loved and lost come flitting before us like shadows on the wall, how often do we indulge the pleasing imagination of their still mingling with us in mysterious intercourse, their wings of light and smiles of gladness hovering over us : delighting to frequent with us hallowed haunts and reparticipate in hallowed joys. This may perchance be a fond illusion regarding others, but it is sublimely true regarding Jesus. When the gates of the morning are opened ; swifter than the arrowy light, His footstep of love is at our threshold. When the gates of the evening revolve on their silent hinges, and day merges and melts into twilight, He is there ! Amid the bustle of life, in "the loud stunning tide of human care," He is there ! By the lonely sickbed, when the glow of health has left our cheek, and the dim night-lamp casts its flickering gleam on our pillow, He is there ! When the King of terrors has entered our dwellings ;—when we are seated amid the awful stillness of the death-chamber, listening in vain for the music of cherished voices, hushed

for the for ever of time, He is there ! In all these diverse experiences, He draws near in touching tenderness, saying. "Lo, I am with you alway." 'I will come in the place of your loved ones. I will be nigh to cheer and comfort, to support and sustain you. I who once wept at a grave am here to weep with you. I will be at your side in all that trying future. I will make my grace sufficient for you, and my promises precious to you, and my love better than all earthly affection. The one is changeable ; I am unchangeable—the one must perish ; I am the strength of your heart and your portion for ever !'

In the original, the word *ALWAY*, in the parting promise, is expressive. It means "all THE days" (all the *appointed* days). Our times are in the hands of Jesus, He counts not our years but our *days* ; He promises to be with us *every day*, to the last day of all. And when that last day comes, He withdraws not His Presence, but changes the scene of it, and says, "To-DAY shalt thou be with Me in PARADISE."

" Oh, there is nothing in the world
To weigh against Thy will ;
Even the dark times I dread the most,
Thy covenant fulfil :
And when the pleasant morning dawns
I find Thee with me still.

" There in the secret of my soul,
Though hosts my peace invade,
Though through a waste and dreary land
My lonely way be made,
Thou, even Thou, wilt comfort me,
I need not be afraid."

" AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD WENT BEFORE THEM TO SEARCH OUT A RESTING-PLACE FOR THEM."



XLVII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"The Word was God."—JOHN i. 1.

Christ's Deity. THIS is what gives to the palm-grove of heavenly promise all its glory.

Let us seek to grasp and realise the full grandeur of the Truth of truths ; to have it more frequently before us as a subject of devout contemplation,—that the Christ of Nazareth, the Saviour of Calvary,—He who bled for us as Man upon the cross, and pleads for us on the throne, is the Mighty Jehovah ; that He was before all things ; that He reared every arch and pillar in the Universe Temple. “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number ; He calleth them all by their names.” Before these stars were made ; before these altar-fires were lighted in immensity ; before man or angel or seraph, throne or dominion or principality or power existed, this all-glorious Being lived—one in essence and substance with the Eternal Father !

The supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Keystone of the arch. Remove it, and the whole superstructure collapses. More than ever Luther said regarding justification, it is the doctrine of a standing or a falling

Church. To eliminate it from the creed of Christendom would be like blotting out the sun from the visible heavens. Oh, if He be but a creature, though the highest in rank in the heavenly peerage, I cannot confide to Him my eternal destinies. If He who bowed His head on that cross be a mere man and no more, I cannot look to Him as the Rock of Ages. A creature! as well pillow my head on the unstable wave. But blessed be God, I *can* plant my foot upon the living Rock of His deity. I can trust in Him, not as a prince, or as the son of man, in whom there would be no stay: but invoking Him as JEHOVAH, I can, with devout confidence of a gracious answer, join in the prayer, "O GOD the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

Great indeed is the mystery of godliness, *God* manifest in the flesh: the Divine Being who created by His word—who sustains by His providence. Let the Unitarian take His Gospel without Godhead in it:—let Infidelity attempt to reduce the Person and mission of the all-glorious Immanuel to that of the mere Founder of a new system of divine philosophy, a new Head of a religious school;—be it ours to pay a nobler and truer homage to Him who is unveiled to us in sacred story as "the Word," "the Life," "the Light," "the Truth," "the Omnipresent," "the Heart-searcher," the "Beginning and the Ending," the Creator of worlds, the Ransomer of souls—the Wonderful—the Adored of angels—the appointed Judge—the enthroned King—the I AM of eternal ages! Be it ours to testify that the struggles and toils of 1800 years have not been made to defend and vindicate a monstrous delusion:—that thousands of crowned martyrs now in heaven have not shed their blood to uphold a lie. Be it ours to see in Him the glory of illimitable Godhead enshrined in a human

tabernacle ;—ay, and better still, be it ours to say, in reverential faith, as we fall at His feet, “ This God shall be *our* God for ever and ever ! ”

In the highest interpretation of the Psalmist’s language, well may we call upon all creation to rise and do homage to this its Incarnate Lord. Praise Him in the heavens ! Praise Him in the heights ! ‘ Thou Sun of this great world, both eye and soul,’ reflect His glory ! Moon ! take thy silver lyre—strike its chords in the praise of thy Maker ! Stars, gather your brilliant gems as a coronal for His brow ! Floods, rise and thunder forth His praise ! Every flower that blooms, come and waft your fragrance around the Rose of Sharon ! Lispings infancy, come with your hosannahs :—Penitence, come bathed in tears :—Sorrow, come in the extremity of anguish to this living God, yet your Brother :—Youth, come with your green ears of consecration :—Manhood, come in your strength :—Old age, come leaning on your staff. Come, saints and prophets of olden time ! Come, noble army of martyrs ! Come, ye heavenly hosts ! cherubim and seraphim, gather in to the universal homage ! Let the Church triumphant echo back the strains of “ the Church throughout all the world”—“ THOU ART THE KING OF GLORY, O CHRIST : THOU ART THE EVERLASTING SON OF THE FATHER ! ”

“ Strong Rock of Ages, swathed in clouds of light,
Whose heights unclimbed, ne’er foot of angel trod:
Ancient of Days, Almighty—Infinite,
Older than Nature’s eldest born ;—Great God !
We praise, we bless, we magnify Thy name !
Through everlasting eras Thou art still the same.”

“ I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, WHICH IS AND WHICH WAS AND
WHICH IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY.”



XLVIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,
neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."*

—JOHN x. 28.

The Imperishable Gift. So speaks the Divine Shepherd to the "sheep in the wilderness," as they repose under the shade of the Palm-trees, and by the Wells of living water.

It is a FREE gift. "*I give.*" Believers have themselves no share in the purchase. Man, in bestowing his gifts, has generally reference to some loving or lovable qualities in the objects of his beneficence. But it was from no attractiveness on their part,—no foreseen good works or virtues, that God was induced to procure and bequeath the priceless heritage. It is a munificent bestowment of sovereign grace and redeeming love. "*I give*"—it is theirs in unqualified, inalienable possession,—a glorious freehold. The ransomed in the heavenly paradise are spoken of as having "*a right to the tree of life.*" It is the right of the slave who has had his freedom purchased. It is the right of the son who has been infest in his patrimonial inheritance. It is the right of the conqueror dividing among his soldiers the honours and trophies of victory which his own valour has won.

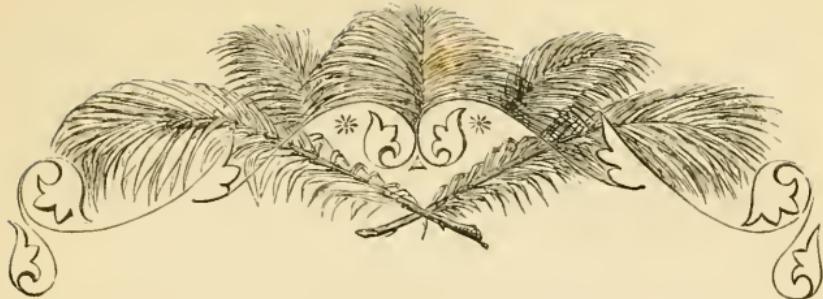
And as it was the free sovereign love of the Great and Good Shepherd, the Son of the Highest, which led Him to *pay* the ransom-price ; so it is His sovereign, irresistible grace which preserves His flock every hour from destruction, and will present each member of it at last faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Let us not lapse into a loose and indefinite theology, by speaking of the “inherent power of the new nature.” That is nothing. It is a shadow—a name—apart from the power of Christ and the indwelling, upholding energy of the Spirit of God. Why was Paul enabled to stand firm when the messenger from Satan was sent to buffet him ? Why did not the thorn in the flesh get the better of his nobler self ? It was because that free grace which had “predestinated” and “called” and justified,” was, in the hour of trial and temptation, made “sufficient for him ;”—God’s strength “perfected in weakness,” yea, overcoming weakness. Let us ever admire, with adoring wonder, this unmerited, undeserved, sovereign freeness, from first to last, of the great salvation. Jesus is the true Zerubbabel, who has laid the foundation, and who also will finish it. Seek to trace His hand in each part of the spiritual building ; beginning, carrying on, completing ;—the Alpha, the Omega ; the Justifier, the Sanctifier, the Glorifier. “Thanks be to God,” says the Apostle, “who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” The pearl would remain for ever in the depths of the ocean unless the diver descended for it ; so, unless He who purchased us as gems and jewels for His crown had taken us from ‘the depths,’ there we should have remained for ever. And as He rescues the pearl, so does He ‘keep’ it in safety, till He finally inserts it in His mediatorial diadem. As His is the glory of the *commencing* work and the *sustaining* work, so His is the glory of the

crowning and consummating work. The branch cannot live severed from the vine. The limb cannot live severed from the body. The Christian lives only by virtue of "Christ his life." It is not our repentance or our prayers, or our habits of grace, or our long standing in grace, which either save or protect us,—but the arm of an omnipotent Redeemer. "The Lord is thy *Keeper*." "He that *keepeth Israel* doth not slumber." "Well might we sit down in despair," says a gifted believer, "and say, who is sufficient for these things? had we not the strength of Omnipotence on our side; had we not everlasting arms underneath us, and sandals proof against the roughest path." Yes, and if, at times, we may be conscious of forfeiting the joys of salvation; it may even be undergoing spiritual darkness; we may feel assured that that darkness generally arises from failing to look above to Jesus and to the grace of Jesus; just as one, turning their back to the sun, sees a shadow projected and that shadow is their own. The remedy for getting quit of the shadow is to turn round to the all-glorious Light of life, with the cry, "More grace! more grace!"

" All is dark on the horizon,
 Clouds returning after rain;
 Faith is languid, Hope is weary,
 And the questions rise again—
 ' Doth the promise fail for ever?
 Hast Thou made all men in vain?'

" O Redeemer! shall one perish
 Who has looked to Thee for aid?
 Let me see Thee, let me hear Thee,
 Through the gloomy midnight shade:
 Utter Thou Thy voice of comfort;
 ' It is I, be not afraid.' "

" HAVING LOVED HIS OWN WHICH WERE IN THE WORLD, HE
 LOVED THEM UNTO THE END."



XLIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"None that trust in Him shall be desolate."

—Ps. xxxiv. 22.

The Recompense of Trust. “*Judea Capta*,” are the words engraved on the well-known Roman coin, upon which impersonated captive Judah is sitting under the fronds of a desolate palm-tree.

Beneath the shadow of the Divine Heavenly Palm, the afflicted Christian can mingle his pensive sadness with the joyous strain, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in Him will I trust” (Ps. xcii. 1, 2).

“Trust God.” It is easy for us to do so in sunshine. It is easy to follow our Leader, as Israel did the pillar-cloud, when a glorious pathway was opened up for them through the tongue of the Red Sea ; or when at Elim they pitched under tapering palm and by gushing fountain ; or when heaven rained down bread on the hungry camp. But it is not so easy to follow when earthly palms wither and fountains fail, and the pillar ceases to guide, and all outward and visible supports are withdrawn. *Then*, however, is the time for faith to rise to the ascendant. When the world is

loud with its atheist sneer,—What of religious supports now? THEN is the time to manifest a simple childlike confidence; and, amid baffling dispensations and frowning providences to exclaim, “*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.*”

Child of Sickness! bound down for years on a lonely pillow—the night-lamp thy companion—disease wasting thy cheeks and furrowing thy brow, weary days and nights appointed thee; tell me, where is the God in whom thou trustest? He is here, is the reply. His presence takes loneliness from my chamber, and sadness from my countenance. His promises are a pillow for my aching head, they point me onwards to that better land where the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick!”

Child of Poverty! where is the God whom thou trustest? Can He visit this rude dwelling? Can His promises be hung on these broken rafters? Can the light of His Word illumine that cheerless hearth and sustain that bent figure, shivering over the smouldering ashes? Yes! He is here. The lips of truth that uttered the beatitude, “Blessed be ye poor,” have not spoken in vain. Bound down by chill penury, forsaken and forgotten in old age, no footstep of mercy heard on my threshold, no lip of man to drop the kindly word, no hand of succour to replenish the empty cupboard; that God above has not deserted me. He has led me to seek and lay up my treasure in a home where want cannot enter, and where the beggar’s hovel is transformed into the kingly mansion!

Bereaved One! where is the God whom thou trustest? Where is the Arm of Omnipotence thou wert wont to lean upon? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has He mocked thy prayers by trampling in the dust thy dearest and best, and left thee to pine and agonise in the bitterness of thy desolate heart and home? Nay, He is *here!* He has

swept down my fond idols, but it was in order that He Himself might occupy the vacant place. I knew Him too well to question the faithfulness of His word and the fidelity of His dealings. I have never known what a God He was, till this hour of bitter trial overtook me! There was a “need be” in every tear, every deathbed, every grave!

Dying One! the closing moments are at hand; the world is receding, the herald symptoms of approaching dissolution are gathering fast round thy pillow, the soul is pluming its wings for the immortal flight! Ere memory begins to fade and the mind becomes a waste; ere the names of friends when mentioned will only be answered by a dull vacant look, and then the hush of awful silence; tell me, ere the last lingering ray of consciousness and thought has vanished, where is the God whom thou trustest? He is here! I feel the everlasting arms underneath and round about me. Heart and flesh are failing. The mists of death are dimming my eyes to the things below, but they are opening on the magnificent vistas of eternity. He who has for long been the object of faith’s reliance, will soon be revealed in full vision and fruition. “Behold God is my salvation, I will *trust* and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: He also is become my salvation.”

“ Still let me be with Thee, Father, and ever be Thou with me :
When the clouds and tempests gather, oh, then, let me trust in Thee.
Let me hide in Thy quiet shadow, let me dwell in Thy secret shrine,
The home of the souls that love Thee, the souls that Thou callest
Thine ! ”

And if any who trace these pages feel themselves still strangers to such simple confiding trust; their inward disquieting thought, ‘How can we possibly live out these

desert privations: that simoom by day, these drenching dews by night? Where can we get food in these dreary leagues of arid sand, or find palm-shade and brook amid these barren rocks and waterless channels?' The message to all such is that addressed of old to the desponding Prophet, who had deserted the palm-tree of Israel and Israel's God for the juniper tree of the desert, "Arise!" God will provide strength for the journey. "Why liest thou on thy face?" said the Divine voice to Moses, when he crouched a sceptic at God's feet, pointing to the barrier mountains behind and the raging sea in front—"Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward!"—"Up, do My bidding; and thou shalt see how I can make My way in the sea, and My path in the mighty waters." "Forward!" said the rebuked hero, clasping the rod of faith which had been lying forgotten at his side, and rising in the might of Jehovah. Forward they *did* go; and what was their confession and anthem on the opposite shore?—"Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." "At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep." "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong God like unto Thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them!"

"If thou couldst *trust*, poor soul,
In Him who rules the whole,
Thou wouldest find peace and rest;
Wisdom and sight are well, but trust is best."

"SAID I NOT UNTO THEE, THAT, IF THOU WOULDEST BELIEVE,
THOU SHOULDEST SEE THE GLORY OF GOD."



L.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."—EPH. ii. 4, 5.

The Riches of God's Mercy. A BEFITTING song this to sing, as the fronds of the Elim-palms are bending over us,—the breath of God turning them into Æolian harps, musical with “the name which is above every name !”

Salvation is here traced up to the riches of God’s *mercy*. It is the offended Sovereign proclaiming amnesty to rebels, lifting the beggar from the dunghill and setting him among princes. The mercy of God ! It is a brief sentence. It can be lisped by a child ; but what seraph can fathom the depths of its meaning ? The inspired Apostle, baffled in the attempt, seems here only able to shadow forth its wonders by heaping together superlatives : “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins” (Eph. ii. 4, 5). Amazing thought ! God’s mercy stooping over us, and His love loving us, when we were morally and spiritually *dead*. Did you ever hear of one loving the dead ? ‘Yes !’ a hundred

lips reply ; ‘ we *have* loved the dead ! We have wept and sobbed over the cold marble ;—we have loved to gaze on those rayless eyes, although the light of life has faded from them for ever here ;—with an unutterably-sacred affection have we loved the broken, mutilated casket, even when the bright jewel had departed.’ But this is not the case in point, in estimating the marvels of the mercy of God. Let us ask rather—Did you ever *love* the dead outcast on the street ? Did you ever *love* the beggar, found, wrapped in rags for his shroud, lying on the open highway ? No ! though you may have pitied him, compassionated him ; though you may have shuddered at the spectacle—no tear of *love* could bedew your cheek. But if human compassion is unable to tell so wondrous a tale, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy.” God has done this. God’s mercy has reached the point of loving the dead outcast—ay ! more—loving the dead enemy : “*Even when we were dead in sins !*”

That mercy of God in Christ embraces, too, the vilest and most miserable. None stand beyond its pale. No gate—no veil—no flaming sword of cherubim bar the way to the mercy-seat. Our sins may have reached unto the clouds, but the heights of the Divine mercy are loftier still : “As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His *mercy* towards them that fear Him.” In writing to Timothy from Rome, the most joyful word St. Paul can utter when he thinks of himself, as “before, a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious,” is this—“*But I obtained MERCY.*” Yes ! come and learn from this giant in grace, when standing on the borders of the grave, the alone foundation of a sinner’s, or rather a believer’s, hope. With all the memories of his apostleship behind him, a thousand

battles of the faith, in which, as a spiritual champion, he had fought and bled and conquered: with the remembrance of Jewish hate and Gentile scorn; the stocks and stripes of Philippi; the buffeting of winter tempests he had braved by land and sea; the moral intrepidity that made him stand amid Athenian philosophers, in the streets of Imperial Rome, and amid the merchant princes of Corinth, pleading the injured cause of his Great Master; the sacrifice of home, country, friends, religion, for a life of untiring and perpetual exile from most of the world's amenities and joys, like a weary bird having no rest for the sole of his foot, and seeking none; and now with the flash of the executioner's sword before him to close the mighty drama of a consecrated existence: yet hear his final plea,—“I obtained MERCY.” Could we follow him now, among the bright martyr-multitude before the throne, doubtless we should find the dungeon-prayer caught up in Paradise, and become the song of Eternity—“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His *mercy* endureth for ever!”

He would remind us, in all this, of the one only ground of hope and confidence and trust we have in the sight of a holy God. He was indeed the last to undervalue the precious fruits of the Spirit, as manifested in the heart and the life of the true believer. In the soul that has been divinely sanctified and purified, there is much to love and admire;—those Christian graces—holy affections and holy deeds—flowers in the Beloved’s garden, which, like so many incense-censers, are sending up their fragrant perfume to heaven. Such, doubtless, are regarded with divine complacency now; and at the Great Day, they will draw from the lips of the Righteous Judge the divine approval and encomium—“Well done, good and faithful servant!” But what would all these (the best of them) avail, when we

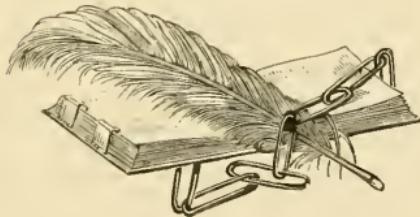
come to regard them as forming our plea at that bar of unspotted rectitude and equity? A poor instalment, verily, in the discharge of an infinite debt. If the Apostle himself once indulged some such dreams of personal merit and sufficiency, the further he advanced in the divine life, the more maturely he grew in grace and holiness and purity; in a word, the nearer he approached to God, the more deeply did he feel his need of *mercy*. His estimate of himself in his closing and riper years is this:—"Less than the least of all saints;"—"Sinners, of whom I am the chief!"

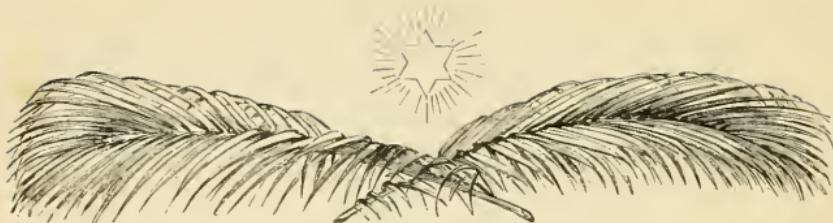
Be it ours ever to take the publican's place; saying as we look to the true Altar of Sacrifice—"God be *merciful* to me, a sinner!" We believe there is no bound or barrier to that ocean of mercy in Christ, save what is erected by the pride, or indifference, or unbelief of man. It laves and washes the rockiest shores of the rockiest heart. St. Paul tells us for our encouragement, why Divine compassion was exercised towards him. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained *mercy*, that in me, first" (*first*, not in point of time, but in point of guilt), "Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." "I look," said Simeon of Cambridge on his deathbed, "as the chief of sinners, for the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, to life eternal. And I lie adoring the sovereignty of God in choosing such an one, and the mercy of God in pardoning such an one, and the patience of God in bearing with such an one, and the faithfulness of God in perfecting His work and performing all His promises to such an one."

How many can add, from deeper and darker and sadder experiences, "Great is Thy *mercy* toward me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lowest hell!"

" Let Thy mercy's wings be spread
O'er me, keep me close to Thee ;
In the peace Thy love doth shed
Let me dwell eternally.
Be my all ; in all I do
Let me only seek Thy will ;
Where the heart to Thee is true,
All is peaceful, calm, and still."

"OH HOW GREAT IS THY GOODNESS, WHICH THOU HAST LAID
UP FOR THEM THAT FEAR THEE; WHICH THOU HAST
WROUGHT FOR THEM THAT TRUST IN THEE
BEFORE THE SONS OF MEN!"





LI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“She hath done what she could.”—MARK xiv. 8.

“Faithful over a few things.”—MATT. xxv. 21.

“To every man his work.”—MARK xiii. 34.

Acceptance of the Little. How many earnest souls there are who give themselves unrest—render themselves unhappy, with the reflection how little they have done—how little—with limited means and resources, material and intellectual—they can do, in the shape of substantial service for the cause of God and His Christ. They have all the desire to do. Their very rest—constrained and unwilling inaction—gives them weariness. They feel like log-bound vessels lazily sleeping on their shadows in the harbour, when others are out nobly wrestling with the storm, conveying priceless stores to needy hearts.

There is an Elim-Palm for such. Both the measure of your ability, and your place and position in life are God-appointed. The Christian poet represents those angels in heaven who “only stand and wait” as “serving,”—doing their Lord’s will,—as truly as the swift-winged messengers who carry to and fro the behests of His pleasure: and of

the Church militant on earth, “Thus saith Jehovah,” by the mouth of His prophet, “In returning and *rest* shall ye be saved : in *quietness* and in confidence shall be your strength.” We can serve ‘God, in rest and in quietness’—in the noiseless tenor of a lowly lot, an uneventful existence—as well as in the feverish bustle or prominent position of an active one ; drawing water from the wells under Elim-palm trees, as well as in grappling with the hosts of Pharaoh or Amalek. Nay, we believe we have abundant warrant for the assertion, that those *most* glorify God who, without the often false stimulus of outward or secondary motives, perform gladly that class of humble, unostentatious deeds, which, requiring no intellectual effort, no brilliant gifts, are unacknowledged by the world’s approval—unplaudited by the world’s hosannahs. Such assuredly will not be unowned or rejected by the Great Recompenser, because they have nothing better or costlier to offer. While it is said of “the mountains” (the Church’s great ones), that they shall “bring peace to the people ;” the “little hills” (the Church’s humble, unknown, obscure ones), are to do so also “by righteousness” (Ps. lxxii. 3).

Let none, then, be coveting opportunity for the execution of onerous labours, or for occupying conspicuous positions, as if these enjoyed a monopoly in the divine favour and approval. We repeat, the hewer of wood, or trimmer of lamps in the Temple—if (what might be deemed) his *drudgery*, were performed from a principle of obedience and lowly fidelity—served the God of Israel as much as the High Priest with his breastplate gleaming with the Urim and Thummim. Motive is everything with the Omniscient Heart Searcher ; and He is satisfied, if we fulfil, with a good conscience, our appointed place and destiny, whatever that may be. The little firefly illuminating the darkness

in the balmy plains of the South, is one of the tiniest lamps in God's magnificent Temple of night—a mere glimmering spark compared with other and nobler altar-fires of moon and stars in the same great sanctuary. But that insect does not refuse to rise on its wings of flame, because unable to emit a greater amount of light ; it is content to shine with the lustre assigned to it in its humble place in the material economy, and the Creator is glorified thereby. The insignificant "nameless rill" does not refuse to sing its way to the ocean, because, on the opposite side of the mountain or valley, a mightier torrent is thundering along, and bearing in its course a larger and wealthier volume. It carries its appointed tribute to the sea ; and He who "sendeth forth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills" expects from it no more. "She hath done what she could," is the Divine meed of approbation. The one lowly talent, conscientiously traded on, will receive its own with usury. The widow's mite and the cup of cold water are accepted, and the intention and desire would be accepted, if there were no mite and no cup to give. See how graciously God owned the unfulfilled purpose of His servant David regarding the erection of the Temple on Zion !—"Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto My name, *thou didst well that it was in thine heart*" (1 Kings viii. 18).

"Some eager hearts—some souls of fire,
Who pant to toil for God and man,
View, with a look of keen desire,
The upland way of toil and pain :
Almost with scorn, they think of rest,
Of holy calm, of tranquil breast.
On others, lowlier tasks are laid,
With love to make the labour light ;
And all their efforts may be shed
On quiet homes and lost to sight."

Wordsworth, in one of his minor poems, speaks beautifully of

“ That best portion of a good man’s life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.”

In our Lord’s parable of the Talents just referred to, *the varied trusts are proportioned to our varied capabilities.* The master gave his servants “ every man according to his several ability.” God, in the dispensing of these sacred trusts, does not act capriciously ; He distributes the talents according to the known powers and capacities of His servants. He gives equitably, and He expects a corresponding repayment. Some, from peculiar outward circumstances—from their position in the Church and the world—will be able to invest a large capital, and draw in a large return : these are the five talented servants. Others move in a humbler and less influential sphere : they have only two talents, and from them, as the result of trading, their Lord expects no more. In either case, they have done their duty up to the measure of their responsibility ; the amount entrusted to them has been doubled ; and their fidelity being thus tested and proved, their Master is satisfied. The Church of Christ is made up of “ vessels of large and small quantity ;” but the Lord does not unreasonably expect the smaller vessel to hold the contents of the large one. The Church is a garden adorned with trees and plants and flowers ; but He does not expect the hyssop to assume the dimensions of the cedar, nor the olive to attain the height of the palm, nor the myrtle to be laden with the fruit of the vine, nor the lily to waft the perfume of the rose. He does not expect the lowly unlettered Christian to fight like the champion of the faith. He does not expect from poverty the

alms it has not to bestow, nor from the sick-bed sufferer the active energies which bodily prostration forbids. Let none needlessly mourn that they cannot glorify God by talents He never gave them, and for which, therefore, they are not accountable. Let none say, ‘Had I been in another position in life, I might have invested a larger capital for my Lord.’ Though you are narrowed and restricted where you are, to the one talent, use it well, and God will accept “according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not.” What a noble programme and directory of duty is that given by the great Apostle in his great Epistle: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith ; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Rom. xii. 6-8.)

“ Last of the labourers, Thy feet I gain.

Lord of the harvest ! And my spirit grieves
That I am burdened, not so much with grain
As with a heaviness of heart and brain !

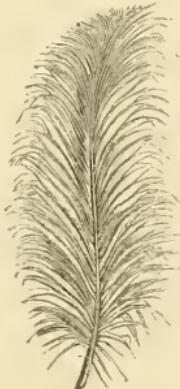
Master, behold my sheaves !

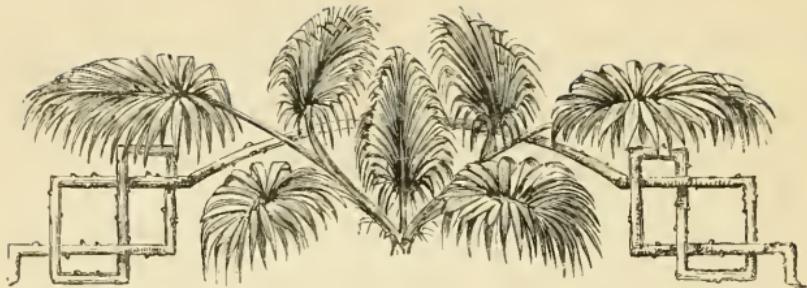
“ Few, light, and worthless—yet their trifling weight
Through all my frame a weary aching leaves ;
For long I struggled with my hapless fate,
And staid and toiled till it was dark and late,
Yet these are all my sheaves !

“ Full well I know I have more tares than wheat,
Brambles and flowers, dry stalks, and withered leaves,
Wherefore I blush and weep, as at Thy feet
I kneel down reverently, and repeat,
‘ Master, behold my sheaves ! ’

“ But I shall gather strength and hope anew,
For well I know Thy patient love perceives
Not what I did, but what I strove to do,
And though the full ripe ears be sadly few,
Thou wilt accept my sheaves ! ”

“ INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.”





LII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

—JOHN vi. 37.

None cast out. AN invitation to every burdened Israelite—
every way-worn pilgrim of the wilderness, to
come for shelter under the branches of the
Heavenly Palm !

How these and such like gracious words which proceeded out of the mouth of Jesus, must have told on the wondering multitudes He addressed, those who never heard kind sayings before;—who were led to imagine that it was learned scribes, or sanctimonious Pharisees, or austere Sadducees, or stoled priests, who alone had any hope of salvation! Can we marvel that “the common people heard Him gladly,” when He lifted them up from the dust of degradation; when He proclaimed boldly—“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” I came not to call *you* rich—*you* learned—*you* who pique yourselves on your religious formalism and self-righteous austerities,—but *you* broken-hearted penitents, weeping prodigals, despairing Magdalenes—*you* the most erring wanderers from the fold, who are really and earnestly seeking to return. “If ANY man thirst, let him come unto

Me and drink." "If ANY man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture."

Reader! say not, 'This invitation cannot be for me. I cannot take my place under the gracious palm-shade, just as I am, with the memory of countless transgressions.' Yes! it is just because you *are* wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, that He invites you to come. Come, just as you are. Christ does not require any previous qualification. It is *because* you are weary He asks you to partake of the shelter. It is *because* of your poverty that He so importunately exclaims—"Behold, I have set before thee an open door." When, in a season of scarcity and want, thousands thrown out of employment are forced to avail themselves of bread doled out to stay the rage of hunger, they are not heard to say—'We must have proper clothing *first*. We must first cover these children's bleeding, frost-bitten feet, before we can venture to appear before the almoners of a city's or a nation's bounty.' No; if they did so, it would vitiate their plea;—it would send them home again to a cupboard, and hearth, and wardrobe, as empty as they left it. It is *because* they appear in tattered rags, and *because* hunger has written its appeal on their emaciated faces and in the hollow eyes of the hapless children at their side, that the door opens for relief.

There is no desert wanderer, haggard and footsore, who may not come to that grove of "exceeding great and precious promises." God has made provision not for the strong only, but for the weak, the tempted, the sorrowful, the suffering. The feeblest bird may make a perch of these branches. The anointing oil of blessing poured on the head of the true Aaron, flows down to the very skirts of His garments, so that the least and lowliest are made partakers of His covenant grace.

It is well for us, however, to remember that there is but one Redeemer; and “neither is there salvation in any other.” A few days previous to the Elim encampment, there was but one way for the Hebrew host through the Red Sea from the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh. There was but one way for evading the destroying angel—by the sprinkling of blood on the door-posts of their dwellings. There was but one way, in a subsequent age, for Rahab escaping the general destruction of Jericho—by hanging out from her window the scarlet thread. There was but one way—by washing in the river of Jordan—that the proud Syrian captain of a yet later day, could have his leprosy healed. The Hebrews, on that memorable night of the death of the first-born, might have built up Egyptian pyramid on pyramid to keep out the messenger of wrath. It would have been of no avail. Or the million army, passing through the sea, might have piled its coral rocks to make an avenue through the waters. The wild waves would have laughed them to scorn and made them the plaything of its tide! Naaman might have made a toilsome pilgrimage to every river of Asia—from Abana and Pharpar, to the Euphrates and the Indus—but all would have been to no purpose. Nothing but ‘the waters of Israel’ would prove efficacious in curing his malady.

Let us make sure of a personal interest in the *one* great Salvation. That Almighty Redeemer remains, to this hour, immutable—all-sufficient;—faithful among the faithless—changeless among the changeable. St. Bernard beautifully sang in the words of his familiar hymn—

“Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts !
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men !
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.”

Yes! thou who art weary, sick at heart it may be of the world which has deceived thee,—bubble after bubble bursting in thine hands ; that gracious Saviour, with outstretched arms, is waiting to welcome thee back. With the hoarded love of eternity in His heart, He is ever repeating the “faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” which heads this meditation—“*Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out !*”

“ With a heart full of anxious request,
Which my Father in heaven bestowed,
I wandered, alone and distressed,
In search of a quiet abode.
Astray and distracted, I cried—
Lord, where would’st Thou have me to be ?
And the voice of the Lamb that had died
Said, ‘Come, My beloved, to ME ! ’

“ I went—for He mightily wins
Weary souls to His peaceful retreat,
And He gave me forgiveness of sins,
And songs that I love to repeat ;
Made pure by the blood that He shed,
My heart in His presence was free,
I was hungry and thirsty—He fed ;
I was sick, and He comforted me.

• • • •
“ He gave me the blessing complete,
The hope that is with me to-day ;
And a quiet abode at His feet,
That shall not be taken away.”

“ WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST.”



LIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God
and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”—TITUS ii. 13.

The blessed Hope. THIS is rest under God's Palm-trees of promise, with a glorious vista seen through their branches. Their fronds form, so to speak, a framework for the believer's distant but “blessed hope”—(as Bishop Middleton translates our motto-verse)—“The glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour.”

That ‘second coming’ was to the early Christians the theme of habitual contemplation—their cherished harbour of refuge in the midst of environing storms: “And to wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. i. 10); “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. iii. 5); “Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jas. v. 8). Moreover, it is well worth noting, that, in the inspired Epistles, it is not the day of *death* which is spoken of or looked forward to by the Church with jubilant expectation, but *the day of Christ's appearing*. Need we wonder at this? Death is no pleasing theme: though the Christian's last enemy, it is an enemy still—‘the King of terrors.’ But the “*Parousia*”—

the Advent of the Divine Saviour—is identified with final triumph over death ; when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality ; and the saying shall be brought to pass as it is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (1 Cor. xv. 54). Not only so, but that “vile body” (itself a part of the redemption-purchase) will come forth from the dishonours of the grave, fashioned like to the glorious body of its glorified Redeemer.

How many anguished, bereaved mourners have had their grief calmed and their tears dried by this sublime antidote of the great Apostle, as he points them on to the second coming of their Lord, and associates that coming with the restoration of their beloved dead ! “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus *will God bring with Him*” (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14). At that blessed season when “the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people ; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God ;” amid these revived friendships and indissoluble reunions, “God”—the God on the throne—the Brother-man—“shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. vii. 17).

Nor is the anticipated joy of that Day altogether a personal and selfish one. No small element of it is the believer’s joy at the glory which will then encircle the brow of his adorable Lord. It will be the public enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth. He will come “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired of them that believe” (2 Thess. i. 10). All the humiliations of His first coming—the manger—the carpenter’s home—the unsheltered head—the nights of wakeful anguish—the scorn, and taunt, and jeer—

the piercing thorns—the bitter cross—the ignominious sepulchre—all, all now exchanged for the shout of welcome ;—“Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him !” (Isa. xxv. 9). How often among His own people on earth is He dishonoured ; wounded in the house of His friends —the unsullied beauty of the Master tarnished with the blemishes and inconsistencies of the disciples. But not so on that Day. Even these marred, blotted, imperfect images and reflections shall then, at least, become perfect copies and transcripts of their glorious Divine Original : “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John iii. 2). “I saw,” says St. John, “the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, *prepared* as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. xxi. 2).

“Let every man that hath this hope in him purify himself even as He is pure” (1 John iii. 3) : amid the rough tear and wear of a work-day world, keeping a conscience void of offence ; “having the loins girded, and the lamps burning ; and being like those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord” (Luke xii. 35, 36). “Blessed is he that watcheth” (Rev. xvi. 15). Blessed is he, who, in whatever calling he be called, therein abides with God. Thus remaining expectant under the shadow of the desert palms, we can mark the rainbow-arch which spans the sky of the future, connecting the cross with the crown ; and say, in lowly believing confidence, with one of the Church’s noblest watchers,— “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at *that day !*” (2 Tim. iv. 8). Yes, it is “to them also that *look* for Him, He shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” The assembled Jewish worshippers *looked* for the reappearance of *their* High Priest, when He was minis-

tering in the Holy of Holies. They waited anxiously in the outer porch to see the veil withdrawn, and the Intercessor of the nation come forth, to pour upon the multitude, with outstretched hands, the old benediction, “*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*” (Num. vi. 24-26). Not till then were the imposing services of that high day of Hebrew festival completed. Do we know and love the significance of the type? Are we on the outlook for our Priest and King returning from the heavenly Presence, to say to the waiting myriads of His redeemed Church, “*Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*”? It was a gladdening sound to the Jewish multitudes in their Temple area, when they heard the music of the silver bells on the hem of the High Priest’s garment, giving intimation of his approach, “*Blessed are they who know the joyful sound.*” “*Blessed are those servants who, WHEN THEIR LORD COMETH, SHALL BE FOUND WATCHING !*”

“ The watchers on the mountain
 Proclaim the Bridegroom near,
 Go, meet Him as He cometh,
 With Hallelujahs clear !
 The marriage feast is waiting,
 The gates wide open stand :
 Up, up ! ye heirs of glory,
 The Bridegroom is at hand ! ”

“ MY SOUL WAITETH FOR THE LORD MORE THAN THEY THAT
 WATCH FOR THE MORNING : I SAY, MORE THAN
 THEY THAT WATCH FOR THE MORNING.”



LIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"As for God, His way is perfect."—Ps. xviii. 30.

The Divine Way perfect. THERE are times in the experience of not a few, when the Elim-palms seem to have succumbed to the tempest; when, amid adverse and baffling providences, "the foundations of the world are out of course," and all things appear to be rushing into wreck and darkness. The Divine, everlasting vigil seems to have ceased; and echo only answers to the wild cry of despair—"Where is now my God?" Why these worldly losses, these cruel disappointments, these couches of sickness, these gaps in the loved circle? God creating affections only to wither them; severing us, in the twinkling of an eye, from those He had sent to be helpers of our faith, interpreters of His own goodness and wisdom and love;—High priests in the domestic temple, whose removal leaves a silent, desolated altar, with incense unkindled and lamps put out, cherished memories alone surviving to read and reveal the blank! Can there be love or wisdom or faithfulness here?

Hush these and such like atheist doubts ; repress these and such like unworthy surmises. "As for God, His way is perfect." This was a lesson impressively taught to Israel as they had now pitched their tents under the desert palms. They, like many of God's Israel still, might have been tempted at first to misinterpret the Divine dealings. At the very outset from Egypt the cloudy pillar appeared to mislead them. Instead of taking them the near and direct route to Canaan, it conducted them round 'by the way of the wilderness.' They had the Red Sea in front, and their pursuers behind. The shout goes up from the Egyptian host — "They are entangled, the wilderness hath shut them in !" Even Moses yields to the panic and despondency of the hour. "Why," says the Jehovah he doubted— "Why liest thou on thy face? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." Forward they *did* go, under the guidance of the symbol of the Divine Presence ; and what was the song with which they made the opposite shores resound ? It was the adoration of *the all-perfect ways of God*, vindicating the rectitude of His procedure ; "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed : Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation."

This loving and gracious Guide still "leadeth Joseph like a flock ;" even although often, in a spiritual sense, He makes 'the depths of the sea' a way for His ransomed to pass over. We, too, may have our circuitous routes through the desert, our Red Seas of trouble, our Marahs of bitterness, our varied seasons of misgiving and despondency and trial. There may seem to be no wisdom in the dealing to which He is subjecting us. His way may truly seem to be "in the sea, and His path in the deep waters, and His judgments unsearchable." But it is for us to listen in sub-

missive faith to His sovereign mandate, "Go forward." Thus following the guidance of the pillar-cloud we cannot go wrong. It is not for us to judge of the reasons for apparently harsh procedure, hidden from our gaze, and known only to the Infinitely Gracious ONE. Even in regard to temporal things, we are constantly taught never to judge prematurely of an incompletely planned. Why disturb those lovely fields, and make rude gashes in those smiling valleys? Wait with your verdict till Science finishes her work, and thousands are seen to speed along the iron highway! Why disturb the virgin marble slumbering in earth's bosom, leaving unsightly seams and scars in its native quarry? Wait till you see that unwieldy block fashioned into a graceful pillar, or into a piece of breathing sculpture! "What I do," says He, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." The dropping or withdrawal of the fronds of some cherished earthly Elim-palm may be to allow heaven's better sunshine, hitherto impeded, to fall full upon you. "Why," says one of the saintliest men of the past generation, "Why are we not amply satisfied and acquiescing in the wise management of the Great Counsellor, who puts clouds and darkness round about Him, bidding us follow at His beck through the cloud, promising an eternal and uninterrupted sunshine on the other side?"

"Commit, then, thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." "Although thou sayest thou canst not see Him, yet judgment is before Him, therefore trust thou in Him." "So long," says an old writer (*Bridge*), "as one who is learning to swim can touch earth with his feet, he does not commit himself to the stream. So long as the soul can stand on second causes, it does not commit itself to the stream of God's mercy." Let us trust Him when we fail to trace Him:—

“ Into the future,
That unknown land,
Fearless we venture,
Holding His hand.
Trusting His promise,
Waiting His will,
Kept by His power
Peaceful and still.”

Thou, O God, didst lead Thy people of old, by the right hand of Moses, with Thy glorious arm, “ dividing the water before them to make Thyself an everlasting name ” (Isa. lxiii. 12). “ Awake, awake,” on our behalf, still, “ O Arm of the Lord ! ” Finite wisdom has no place in Thy dealings. Let us seek no other way, let us surrender ourselves to no other guidance but His ; remembering that “ *all* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.” We may now be, like the panic-stricken Hebrews, confronting the barrier waves ; the unsparing foe behind, the desolate wilderness around. But fear not ! that sea will, in some gracious way, recede to make a dry-shod pathway ; that wilderness on the other side, with dreary sand and beetling cliff, will provide Elim resting-places with overshadowing palms and refreshing fountains. At all events, the day is coming, when, if not under the palms of the wilderness—at least in the true Resting-places of the Heavenly Elim—we shall join in the triumphant ascription, “ The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.” “ Soon,” says an eminent Christian now experiencing the reality of her own words, “ Soon our tale shall be finished ; the history of our lives will be put by in the library of God as a volume of His faithfulness ; ” and heaven will resound with this song, which on earth is oft warbled with trembling lips, “ *As for God, His way is perfect !* ”

“ Times are changing, days are flying,
Years are quickly past and gone ;
While the wildly mingled murmur
Of life’s busy hum goes on.
Sounds of tumult, sounds of triumph,
Marriage chimes and passing bell ;
Yet, through all, one keynote sounding
Angels’ watchword—‘ It is well ! ’

“ We may hear it through the rushing
Of the midnight tempest’s wave ;
We may hear it through the weeping
Round the newly-covered grave ;
In the dreary house of mourning,
In the darkened room of pain,
If we listen meekly, rightly,
We may catch that soothing strain.

“ And thus, while the years are fleeting,
Though our joys are with them gone,
In Thy changeless love rejoicing,
We shall journey calmly on.
Till at last, all sorrow over,
Each our tale of grace shall tell
In the heavenly chorus joining—
‘ Lord, Thou hast done all things well ! ’ ”

“ IS IT WELL WITH THEE ? . . . AND SHE ANSWERED,
IT IS WELL ! ”



LV.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“*We* which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto
the day of Jesus Christ.”—PHIL. i. 6.

“*We* shall not die.”—HAB. i. 12.

Persever-
ance.

IN looking from underneath the shade of the palm-trees, on the long untrodden journey ere the true Canaan can be reached, the thought cannot fail at times to obtrude itself, Can we trust to be safeguarded through this great and terrible wilderness? Can we rely on the God of the Pillar-cloud conducting us to the brink of Jordan and thence to “the shining fields” beyond? Rather, is there no danger to be apprehended of spiritual drought and famine, or spiritual death, overtaking us? May it not be sadly fulfilled, with us, in a spiritual sense, as it was with the Pilgrim Hebrews in a literal, that through apostacy, unbelief, and backsliding, “we shall never enter into His rest”?

No. We have the sure word of promise of “a God who cannot lie,” “*Ye shall go over and possess that good land*” (Deut. iv. 22). “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel,

Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. xliii. 13). All is guaranteed to us in what the old writers call "the charter-deed of the Everlasting Covenant." The immutability of the Divine counsel has been confirmed unto us by oath. In the first of our motto-verses the great Apostle speaks with unhesitating assurance;—"being *confident* of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." He does not, indeed, aver, that "good work" is never to be impeded. God has never given promise in Scripture, with regard to spiritual experience, of an unclouded day—uninterrupted sunshine. "The morning without clouds" is a heavenly emblem. The earthly one is "a day in which the light shall neither be clear nor dark" (Zech. xiv. 6). The analogy of the outer world of nature, at least under these our chequered and ever-varying skies, teaches us this. Spring comes smiling, and pours her blossoms into the lap of Summer. But the skies lower, the rain and battering hail descend, the virgin blossoms droop their heads and almost die. Summer again smiles, and the meadows look gay; the flowers ring merry chimes with their leaves and petals and swing their fragrant censers. But all at once drought comes with her fiery, merciless footsteps. Every blade and floweret, gasping for breath, lift their blanched eyelids to the brazen sky; or the night winds rock the laden branches and strew the ground. Thus, we see, it is not one unvarying, unchecked progression, from the opening bud to the matured fruit. But every succeeding month

is more or less scarred by drought and moisture, wind and rain and storm. Yet, never once has Autumn failed to gather up her golden sheaves ; ay, and if you ask her testimony, she will tell that the very storm, and blackened skies, and descending torrents you dreaded as foes, were the best auxiliaries in filling her garners. Be not desponding now, because of present passing shadows, but “thank God, and take courage.” “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down : for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand” (Ps. xxxvii. 24). It is written, that “at evening time it shall be light” (Zech. xiv. 7). The sun may wade all day through murky clouds, but he will pillow his head at night on a couch of vermillion and amber. “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold” (Ps. lxviii. 13).

The second of our motto-verses forms part of an impassioned appeal of the Prophet Habakkuk in the prospect of impending national calamity. The great military power of that era of the world was menacing the cities and homes of Palestine. “Terrible and dreadful”—their horses “swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves” (i. 7, 8). Overwhelmed at the thought of imminent judgment and desolation ; the seer can discern no silver lining in the *earthly* cloud. He turns from man to God. He takes refuge in that sublime truth—the Immutability of a covenant JEHOVAH ; and breaks out in these beautiful words of calm confidence, “Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine *Holy One?* *we shall not die!*” No : though the hosts of the Chaldeans should sweep the battle-plains ; though they should leave behind them a track of blood and ashes and smoke ; though the cry of suffering thousands should ascend apparently un-

succoured to heaven, "We shall not die." The God of our Fathers will not be untrue to His oath, or unmindful of His covenant. He will not cast off for ever, or root out our name and remembrance from the earth.

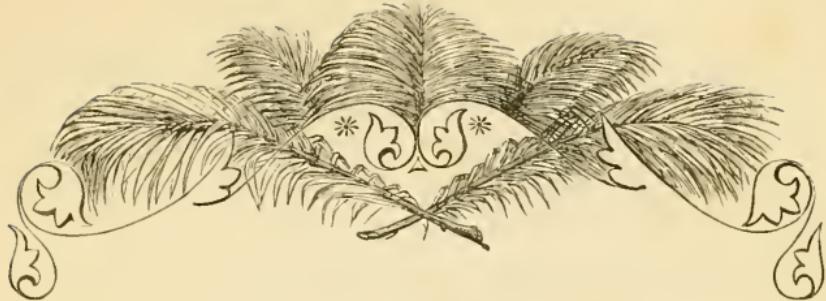
"*I give unto them,*" is His own blessed word and guarantee to His true Israel still, "eternal life, and they shall never perish." "What God hath spoken, He is able also to perform." The good work begun, He will also finish. Let this ever be our rallying call when wounded in the fight, "*This is mine infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High!*"

"He will never fail us,
He will not forsake ;
His eternal covenant,
He will never break.

"Onward, then, and fear not,
Children of the Day !
For His Word shall never,
Never pass away!"

"IT IS GOOD THAT A MAN SHOULD BOTH HOPE AND QUIETLY
WAIT FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD."





LVI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he
meditate day and night."—Ps. i. 2.*

Delight in God's law. THESE form the opening note of the Psalter : the motto and superscription which first strike the eye, just as we are entering this glorious Temple of Praise. The verse following is a delineation of the true believer. But it would almost seem, with equal beauty, to describe the Elim-palm we are now to speak of, and under which spiritual Israel ever love to encamp—the precious, life-giving Word :—"A tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither" (ver. 3).

That Palm-tree was planted by God. The whispers of its fronds, if we may so speak, form the declaration of His own sacred, unchanging mind to His Church. Though this revelation of His will finds its way through human instrumentality, the voice is from heaven ; the river, 'clear as crystal,' is from before the throne. There may be diversities of gifts and temperaments in the inspired authors of the Holy Book ;—there may be apparent discrepancies in the tints of the divine picture ; but each historian and

prophet, psalmist and evangelist, can say, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer,"—that ready Writer being the Spirit of God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We have "not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." That Bible would be incomprehensible on the theory of mere human authorship. Many of the compositors of this great repertory of life and love and consolation, were illiterate, uneducated men—strangers to all the learning and culture of the schools. They were separated from one another by hundreds, indeed, thousands of years. And yet what a unity in their writings! what concord, homogeneity! and that too without the possibility of collusion, or preconcerted plan. The Temple with one altar and one God, yet with a thousand windows all shedding the same mellowed divine light. They have weaved one beautiful, consistent pattern, one harmonious whole. They point to one and the same glorious method of salvation, and one too beyond the ken of reason. "Built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets," we have here a building "fitly framed together." It is more than man's work. It points to its own high original. It bears the seal and signature of heaven.

Let us look to this blessed Bible as a supreme personal blessing. It is the very message we need. How it speaks to the conscience! What a discerner of the moral being! Like the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, it is "full of eyes before and behind." How it ransacks the halls of memory; penetrates the labyrinths of the soul;—a faithful mirror reflecting and exposing the chambers of imagery. It meets the longing necessities of our natures. It offers us a complete salvation; a salvation not only from the guilt, but from the power of sin. It comes to us, independent of all

churches and conventional distinctions. It meets us on the common ground of humanity ; as sinners carrying the same burdens, subject to the same weaknesses, grappling with the same temptations, bowed with the same sorrows, travelling to the same goal of death, having the same reversion of an eternal destiny. Never book spake like this Book. We can say of it, as David, of Goliath's sword, "There is none like it." It is a Volume suited for all, designed for all ;—young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. In the well-known words of Tertullian, "It is like a vast lake, in which some places are so deep that an elephant may swim in them, and other parts so shallow that a child can wade through them." And, finally, it opens, as no other Revelation ever did, or ever can, the gates into the Celestial City. It is a glorious fiery pillar, lighting the van of the true Israel of God through every stage of the journey, till it brings them to the heavenly Canaan. And is not this an object worthy of the Great Father of all?—to prepare this missive of love for His sin-stricken, diseased, captive, dying children ; that with it in their hands as an infallible directory and guide, they may go up and on through the wilderness to the Eternal Home, gladdened with hopes which are full of immortality !

"How miserable it would make me now," says a philosophic writer and thinker once borne along the current of scepticism, "to give up the Bible ! How I cling to its assurances of pardon and free acceptance, and undeserved love and favour, as my chief and only hope !"

Go, gather all the philosophers of antiquity, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle. Bring together the wise men of Greece, the philosophers of Alexandria, the sages of Rome. Ask if their combined and collected wisdom ever solved the doubts of one awakened soul, as have done these leaves

of this hallowed Book? Which of them ever dried the tear of widowhood as these? Which of them ever smoothed the pillow of the fatherless as these? Which of them ever lighted the torch of hope and peace at the dying bed as these, and flashed upon the departing soul visions of unearthly joy? O Pagan darkness! where was *thy* song in the night? In the region and shadow of death where did *thy* light arise? But "we have a more sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed." Let us know it, in our personal and individual experience, as "the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls" (James i. 21). "*Engrafted*," the figure is significant and expressive. The graft in outer nature converts the weak tree, or bush, or stem, into a strong one. It transforms deformity into beauty. It puts, in the stead of commonplace blossoms, tints of varied loveliness. The dog-rose of the hedge side, from the pauper of his race, becomes the stock and scion of a royal line; the unfragrant plant of the thicket is made to swing, from his grafted stalks, new censers of sweetest incense on the passing breeze. Similar, but infinitely more glorious, is the spiritual transformation effected on the soul by the engrafting of God's holy Word. The influence of its precepts, its promises, its motives, its encouragements, renews and revolutionises the whole moral being. That soul becomes "a new creation," a "tree of righteousness." In the hands of the Divine Spirit, operating through the Scriptures, the beautiful figurative language of the prophet is illustrated and fulfilled—"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree."

May it be ours, while knowing experimentally this grafting process with its transforming results in "the salvation of our souls":—to value with an ever-increasing estimate the

instrumentality by which the new life is generated, and by which it is promoted and sustained. May it be ours to love our Bible through life's morning and mid-day, so that at the sunset-hour its glorious truths may, like the Alpine summits, be illuminated to our spiritual vision when the valleys are in shadow. Our prop and support amid the chequered scenes of the pilgrimage, may it form our staff in the swellings of Jordan.

“ It is so blest to trust Thy Word alone;
I do not ask to see
The unveiling of Thy purpose, or the shining
Of future light on mysteries untwining,
Thy promise-roll is all my own,
Thy Word is enough for me.”

“ REMEMBER THE WORD UNTO THY SERVANT, UPON WHICH
THOU HAST CAUSED ME TO HOPE.”





LVII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through
faith in His blood."*—ROM. iii. 25.

Christ the Propitiation. HERE is rest under the true Mercy-seat ; the antitype of that which, in the earlier dispensation, was surrounded with palm-wreathed carvings on “the Holy Oracle.”

The great redemption is finished. The blood of the Divine Surety has been shed. The Lamb for the burnt-offering has been immolated ; access has been provided into “the Holiest of all.” Through the rent veil of the Redeemer’s flesh, the approach is available to every true, believing Israelite, by “*faith in His blood.*” How many among the votaries of a false and spurious Christianity, are looking to Christ through material relics—pieces of the so-called real cross, fragments of the spear or thorn-crown, or seamless robe ! We are called to look “*through faith.*” How many more are groping their way to Him through propitiations of their own : penances, and prayers, and fastings, and flagellations. The Propitiation is completed : “Whom God hath set forth.” If the Jewish Hierarch, as he stood at the mercy-seat, instead of sprinkling the blood, had stripped the jewels from breastplate and mitre, and

flung them on the sacred chest, what would all have availed? *Nothing.* There was but *one* offering efficacious there: an offering composed not of ‘pearls from the ocean, or gold from the mine;’—“When I see THE BLOOD I will pass over you.”

The efficacy of the blood of the Great Sacrifice is inexhaustible. Revelation unfolds “an hundred and forty and four thousand” with lustrous robes, washed and made white in it; and still the Propitiation is “set forth;” still the way into the Holiest and to acceptance is open. Countless pilgrims, weary and heavy-laden, have encamped by the antitypical Wells and Palms of Elim. Still is the umbrageous shelter ample as ever. Still is the invitation unlimited as ever,—“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

The word “Propitiation” in our motto-verse, as is well known, refers to the lid or covering of the Ark of the Covenant, above which were the overshadowing wings of the cherubim. Within the Ark were deposited the two tables of stone, on which were engraven the ten commandments, the words of the Eternal decalogue. Impressive and significant, surely, was that old symbolism! The sinner or worshipper (through his representative in the person of the Jewish High-priest) draws nigh with blood in his hand—this he sprinkles *above* the mercy-seat and *before* the mercy-seat; the purple stream falls on the floor at his feet. The law of God is still there with all its demands intact and inviolate; unabrogated, unrepealed. It utters the condemning word, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” But *between* the law and the trembling worshipper there is this wrought covering; the glorious type of Him, who, to all His true people, is a shelter from the curses of the law;—“a refuge from the storm and a covert from the

tempest." Thus do we see the old, but ever-binding and obligatory Tables of Sinai's covenant, screened out of sight by the intervening barrier ;—hidden, as a covenant of works, by the better work of Jesus. We can take up with joyful confidence the prayer of the publican in the parable (Luke xviii. 10), in which prayer, it is well worthy of note, the very word which here occurs, "*propitiation*," though differently rendered, is also employed,—“God be MERCIFUL to me a sinner !” ‘Be *merciful*’—but let mercy reach me by the alone channel through which it can flow—mercy by *sacrifice*—mercy through the atoning blood of the Immaculate Surety.

Believer ! come, seat yourself under the shadow of this heavenly Palm, and exult in your inviolable safety and security ! God hath set *Him* forth as a Propitiatory. He (the true ‘shield, and lifter-up of thy head’), “stands between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed !”

“ Trembling with guilt, oppressed with fear,
Unfailing shelter I have here.
Long have I roamed in want and pain,
Long have I sought for rest in vain ;
Wilderer in doubt, in darkness lost,
My soul fierce driven and tempest-tost.
But forth from dark and stormy sky
Beneath the mercy-seat I fly.
There I repose with fears all fled,
Pardoned, accepted, comforted.
The present, peace—the past, forgiven,
The future, vista-views of heaven.
Jesus ! my soul alone relies
On Thine accepted Sacrifice.”

“ THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US
FROM ALL SIN.”



LVIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Thou hast put gladness in my heart."—Ps. iv. 7. .

"The glorious liberty of the children of God."—ROM. viii. 21.

Fulness of Joy. Two gracious Palm-trees interweaving their fronds over the heads of the spiritual Pilgrim, and whispering of repose and freedom, security and peace.

How the captive who, through the grated window of his cell, only *sees* the light—no more, envies the feeblest songsters of the grove which make a perch on the iron bars! Why? Because they are *free*. They are living in the element for which God designed them. They can mount in the wide sky, poise themselves on wing, and make eave, or tree-top, or rock, their home, as they please. But how can he, immured within these damp dungeon walls, be happy—severed from all that makes life a boon? As from his couch of straw he notes their plumage, like a lightning-flash, glancing in the bright rays of a sun he cannot enjoy, how sadly and truthfully does he wail out the aspiration, “Oh,

that I had wings, for then would I fly away, and be at rest!"

There is a deeper, sadder truth in all this, regarding the nobler spiritual aspirations of the soul. That soul cannot be satisfied with its exile from true home and liberty and rest. Worldly pleasures, riches, honours, are poor inadequate substitutes for what is higher and more enduring. You may as well dream of filling up a gulph with a few pebbles or grains of sand, as fill the capacities of immortal natures with anything finite. Men may do what they can to quench the spark of immortality within them. In the pursuit of earthly happiness and gain and renown, they may throw baits to the soul, and cheat it into a belief that they *are* giving it a satisfying portion. Just as the eagle may be satisfied for the moment with the carrion thrown into his cage; or the lion may be appeased for the moment with the food thrown into his den. But the spiritual nature, rational, immortal, fashioned originally after the image of God, will (with the instinct of these kingly denizens of the lower creation) give ever and anon evidence of felt conscious degradation, if its aspirations be left limited and fettered with the things of sense and time. There are many men and women caressed in the lap of fortune—pillowed and cushioned and charioted in luxury—with their eye resting on gilded magnificence—their ears regaled with luscious music—their tables surfeited with splendour—the world gazing upon them with envious eye, as "prosperous and happy;"—yet, follow them to their secret chambers, where the sembl'd look of elation is laid aside, and where the silence and solitude shut out the pomp and pageantry of life:—how solemn, how humbling, to know, were that closed door and that lone heart unlocked, that it would be to hear the child of fortune (a captive prisoner in a gilded cell)

wailing out the confession, “ I have no gladness with it all. I am not *satisfied* with it all. There is an aching void in this heart the world can never fill ! ”

Yes ! and nothing earthly can fill it, or impart to it the longed-for “ gladness.” Not change of scene or circumstance—though many seem to think so ;—like the wounded bird, making its perch on one bough after another, but the wound no easier : or like the suffering invalid, turning from side to side on his weary pillow, thinking every change will be less irksome, while the gnawing pain remains the same. No ! One portion alone can satisfy ; One escape,—One refuge alone is there from “ the windy storm and tempest.” An Oriental writer mentions, regarding the turtle-dove, that it never pauses in its flight ; that when its wings are weary, it poises itself on one, while the other droops for a little by its side, and when rested, the intermittent flight proceeds. Beautiful emblem of what, at least, we should *seek to be* and to *do*. Resting not—making no perch of the world : but, in the pure cloudless ethereal regions of faith and love and holiness, soaring ever higher to our home in the hills of God !

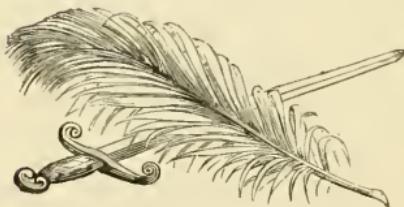
“ Oh, had I, my Saviour, the wings of a dove,
How soon would I soar to Thy presence above,
How soon would I fly where the weary have rest,
And hide all my cares in Thy sheltering breast.

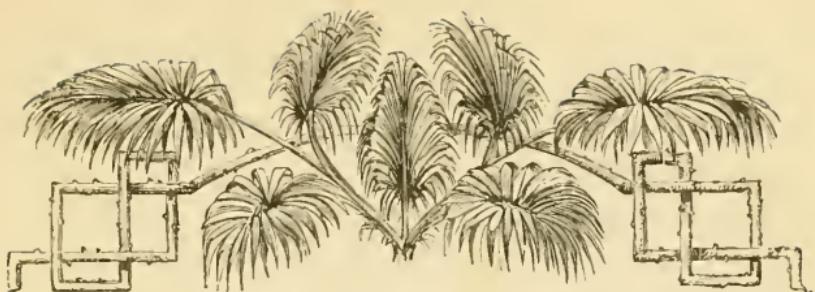
“ I flutter, I struggle, I pant to get free,
I feel me a captive while banished from Thee !
A pilgrim and stranger the desert I roam,
And look on to Heaven and long to be home !

“ Ah ! there the wild tempest for ever shall cease ;
No billows shall ruffle that haven of peace,
Temptation and trouble alike shall depart,
All tears from the eye, and all sin from the heart !

“ Soon—soon may this Eden of promise be mine,
Rise, bright sun of glory, no more to decline !
Thy light, yet unrisen, the wilderness cheers ;
Oh, what will it be when the fulness appears ! ”

“ IN THE LORD PUT I MY TRUST : HOW SAY YE TO MY SOUL,
FLEE AS A BIRD TO YOUR MOUNTAIN ? ”





LIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to
the end."—JOHN xiii. 1.*

*"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of
My hand."—JOHN x. 38.*

*"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me: and him that
cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.*

Inviolable Security. THESE three verses bring before us the indissoluble union between the believer and his Lord. That union, once completed, is indestructible. It is hedged round and buttressed with immutable guarantees. "Our lives are hid with Christ in God." "If we perish," says Luther, "Christ perisheth with us." Identifying Himself with His people, He may be supposed to say, as David said to Abiathar, "Abide with me, for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life, but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." And what is this safeguard? It is the Deity of the Redeemer. He who gives me life, and who promises that that life is imperishable, is "*the Mighty God.*" The hope of eternal life, promised before the world began, stands on the Rock of Ages. Divinity

gives it strength. He who is able to keep me from falling, is the “only wise GOD our *Saviour*.”

It is true, indeed, the life of the most devoted believer has its ebbs and flows, by reason of his own backslidings, corruptions, and unwatchfulness. “Young sailors,” says Rutherford, “think the shore and land are moving, while it is they themselves all the while. So we often think God is changing, while the change is all in ourselves.” The sheep of Christ may, in some moment of temptation, be found, and *are* found, wandering along the dark glen, entangled in brier-thickets, or carried down the swollen stream. But as the shepherd among ourselves puts a mark on the various members of his flock, that he may know his own, so the sheep of Christ bear upon them what the old writers call “the blood-mark of the covenant”—and of these, the Great Shepherd (when they may be themselves uttering the cry of despair), says, in one of our motto-texts, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Their soul safety may seem to be imperilled, but it is only as the flow of the majestic river is *apparently* impeded by the mass of opposing rock in its channel. It is fretted for the moment; but, after clearing the temporary barrier, it dashes onwards, with grander impetuosity, in its way to the ocean. So with the Christian. Temptations may obstruct and arrest the smooth current of his spiritual and eternal life; but it is only for the moment;—He that hath begun the good work—He that hath begun the new being—will carry it on until the day of the Lord Jesus. You may as soon dream of stemming a river—damming up the mountain torrent as it plunges over rock and cataract in its way to the shoreless sea—as arrest the flow of that God-given life. Remember the Apostle’s golden chain—“Whom He did predestinate

them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified !” We may lose sight of the links of the chain, but it never can be broken. We love this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. We cannot believe in the possibility of a man being regenerated to-day and unregenerated to-morrow. As Christ’s blood has purchased, so will His grace sanctify and His power save. “ Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end.” If we are ever tempted to doubt or despond—if ever led to fear that, as wandering sheep, we may be fatally swept down the rapids, or fall a prey to the evening wolves—let us think of a living, life-giving, life-sustaining Intercessor on the throne of Heaven ; —the Shepherd’s eye watching us from the mountains of myrrh and the hills of frankincense ! Israel could never have coped with the disciplined chieftains of Amalek, but for the uplifted hands of their interceding head on the mount at Rephidim. They would have been scattered as chaff, and their bones left to bleach in the wilderness. Joshua, with all his fiery courage, as column after column swept along the valley beneath, would have been nothing, had not Moses been pleading on the hill. Blessed be God, we have *One* on the heavenly mount, whose arms never faint—whose hands never grow weary. His words have a perpetual meaning—a perpetual music—“ I *have* prayed for thee—I *am* praying for thee—that thy faith fail not.” Ye who are Christ’s own, see the secret of your preservation,—your perseverance ; —see the secret of this marvellous triumph of your weakness over Satan’s strength—the “ worm Jacob ” in the strength of his Saviour-God “ thrashing the mountains, and beating them small, and making the hills like chaff ; ”—the spiritual David, with a few brook-pebbles laying low the giants of sin and unbelief ! Yes, indeed,

it is a mighty marvel, the security of every member of God's family. This poor plant—beaten with wind and hail, outliving all, and destined to flourish in eternal luxuriance and beauty. This fragile vessel—the sport of ten thousand adverse influences—buffeted by the waves—left for nights on the starless ocean—grazing with its keel the rocks of temptation—yet outriding the storm, and entering peacefully the haven. This vile heart with its legion-foes confederate with Satan,—Pleasure in its Proteus shapes—Worldliness with its hydra-headed power—the archers of Mammon with their golden arrows—our own sins—each individual sin we commit, a foul attempt on our part to pluck us out of the Saviour's hand :—yet the battle is certain to end in triumph. In earthly battles, victory trembles in the scale often for long hours of ensanguined fight ; neither side can predict the results. By some apparent accident—some trifles—the fortunes of the day may be decided—the destiny of a country altered, the liberty of a people lost or won. But no such uncertainty hovers over this spiritual conflict ;—success is sure ;—no trophy will be lost ;—no straggler will be left to perish ;—as with Israel in quitting Egypt, “not a hoof will be left behind.” You will not only be conquerors, but “*more* than conquerors, through Him that loved you !” “*I* give unto you,” says He, “eternal life.” ‘Your names are imperishably engraven on this Heart of love—on this priestly Breastplate,—and they never can be erased !’

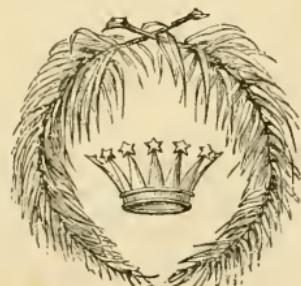
He even tells the measure of that love. It is gauged by no human plumb-line. “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you !” We must first attempt to understand the intensity of the love subsisting between the Son and the adorable Father, before we can rightly estimate the depth of affection between Christ and those whom He has from all

eternity redeemed with His precious blood. "Nothing would surprise me very much," said a dying believer, "after having found out God loved me. . . . The *breadth* of that love indicates that it is for the whole world ; the *length*, from eternity to eternity ; the *depth*, to the vilest of sinners ; and the *height*, to raise us to heaven" (*Victory Won*).

" Everlasting arms of love
Are beneath, around, above ;
He who left His throne of light
And unnumbered angels bright,
He who faced the fiery flood,
Braved the baptism of blood,
Who upon the accursed tree
Gave His precious life for me :—

" He who marks each falling tear
Of His burden'd pilgrims here,
Never slumbering, never sleeping,
Vigils ever wakeful keeping ;
Faithful He, whate'er betide,
Is my everlasting Guide.
Safe, howe'er the sky o'ercast,
He will bring me home at last ! "

" SO HE BRINGETH THEM UNTO THEIR DESIRED HAVEN."





LX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—2 TIM. i. 12.

The safe Deposit. WE have here what formed, in the hour of waning existence, the rest of a weary spirit,—the pillow on which a dying spiritual hero reposed his aching head. This noblest champion of the faith had reached the Border river. But he finds the God of the Elim-palms has not left him at that supreme moment without a shelter. The same Jesus who had whispered in his ear accents of peace and hope and joy, ever since the memorable occasion when "he journeyed towards Damascus," mingles the divinest music of His name with the swellings of Jordan!

Paul, when he uttered these words, was left well-nigh alone; condemned to mourn in secret and solitude over the dereliction of former associates and friends. They had quailed before the coming tempest, and abandoned the noble vessel to wrestle, as best it could, among the breakers. Craven-hearted themselves, they had apparently tried to

appeal to the old prisoner's fears. 'Why persist in the hopeless cause, and prolong the hopeless conflict? Why maintain an unequal struggle for that which, being in antagonism to the Empire's belief, and to the will of the Cæsars, must, sooner or later, fall to the ground? Why perish in the flames or by the sword, for what is doomed to perish with you?' 'Nay,' was his reply; 'disturb me not. Clinging to that faith in which I have lived, and for which I am now ready to die, is no act of wilful, blind fanaticism,—the reckless devotion of a visionary dreamer to a doomed and desperate cause. I have nobler and loftier anticipations regarding that for which I suffer. I have a grander confidence in the majesty of truth, than to suppose that it can eventually be crushed and overthrown by the base tyranny and hostility of man. I have appealed to a more righteous bar. That God, who sent His angel to me in the midst of the storm, will not leave me now. He has delivered me, and He will yet deliver me from the lions' mouth. My enemies may do their worst. They may insult my grey hairs; they may load me with irons; they may doom me to the public exposure of the amphitheatre; they may burn my body and scatter its ashes on that Tiber; but, "nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Beautiful and significant is the *formula*, if we may so express it, of this farewell Creed of the Apostle. He does not say, 'I know *what* I have believed,' but "I know *whom* I have believed;" or (as that is better rendered in the margin), "I know whom I have *trusted*." It is not facts, or doctrines, or confessions, or sects, or churches he speaks of, but his *Living Lord*:—"It is not even Christianity he

boasts of, but Christ." This dying confession indeed of his faith, is quite what we would have expected from him. The motto of his existence was this—"To me to live is Christ,"—"Christ my life." Life to him was a hallowed journey with Jesus at his side. He loved Him, and leant upon Him as an earthly friend ; like the sunflower opening to the radiant beams, and drooping in sadness and sorrow when that sun is away. Belief, too, was with him, not a mere mental act—the cold calculating subscription of reason. It was the cleaving, trustful homage of a devoted heart ; a loyal allegiance of the intellect, the thoughts, the motives, the will, the affections, to the Redeemer, as absolute Lord and ever-present King. Neither parent, nor sister, nor associate in his old Tarsus home, did he ever love like this Jesus of Nazareth. He had tried Him, and he had never found Him to fail. He therefore rejects with scorn the appeals of his timid and treacherous advisers, to purchase immunity from suffering by a base denial of his Lord. That trust of his was no enthusiastic dream. He had not abandoned home or kindred ; he had not forfeited all he loved and valued on earth for the bauble of an hour. He had counted the cost ; he had tested this "Stone laid in Zion ;" he had found Him "a tried stone, a sure foundation." The heights above might combine with the depths beneath ; fiendish men might be confederate with fiendish devils, in trying to shatter his confidence and blight his hope ; but none would be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord !

"Alone ! yet not alone"—"The Captain of the Lord's host" was with him—"The LORD," he says, "stood with me and strengthened me." It was not in vain that he was then consummating the life-long act of 'pouring out' his

consecrated existence as a libation on God's altar. The Great Angel of the Covenant was there, to accept the offerer and the sacrifice. Perfumed with other merits than his, the incense-cloud went up with acceptance before God.

Yes, *with other merits than his*. For this, after all, is what mainly arrests us in his dying utterance. Surely, if ever the child of Adam could enter heaven on the ground of his own doings, it was he who penned that brief farewell saying :—he whose life-motto was, “*always abounding in the work of the Lord*.” Think of his graces as a Christian, his success as a minister, his labours as an apostle ! Who, more than he, had *earned* his crown ? who, more than he, could take his stand at the bar of God *loaded* with merit ? How different ! All his own once-boasted righteousness is like the yielding ice beneath his feet. It melted before the blaze of God's throne of purity. In the present hour of approaching dissolution, just when this mighty denizen in God's forest seemed (like some trees in their golden autumn tints) grandest in decay ; just as his soul is about to wing its eagle-flight to the spirit-land, a crucified Redeemer is clung to with an ever fonder, holier trust.—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners !”

“Thus holy Paul” (says Thomas Case, 1670), “in his own name, and in the name of other of his brethren and companions in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, marched out of the field of this world with colours flying and drums beating, and thus exulting over death as a conqueror—“O Death, where is thy sting ? O Grave, where is thy victory ?”

A farewell—a dying hour—must, sooner or later, be our experience also ; that solemn moment—when, in the words of an old writer (Noyes), “the silver cord by which life is

suspended is worn out at last, and the lamp of life falls to the ground ; the lights are extinguished, and the golden bowl which fed them broken." Amid this wreck of the earthly, are we prepared for our entrance on the heavenly ? to leave the Elim encampment and enter the true " City of Palm-trees " (2 Chron. xxviii. 15). Have we committed our souls and their everlasting interests in safe deposit into the hands of our divine Redeemer ? If so, the last enemy is robbed of its triumph. " Death to the believer," said Hedley Vicars, " is, after all, but an incident in immortality." Equally beautiful and characteristic was the devoted M'Cheyne's definition of the same ;—" a leap into the arms of Infinite Love." A well-known Christian of an older age (Ambrose) speaks of it as " the wind which blows the bud of grace into the flower of glory." Whether still called to tread the wilderness, or when summoned to the brink of Jordan, may it be ours to take up the simple strains of one of Luther's saintly followers—

" God, my Father, to Thy hand
 This spirit I bequeath ;
 Guide it through this desert land,
 And through the gates of death.

" By Thy gift, this soul was mine ;
 Take it to Thyself again ;
 So shall it for ever Thine
 In life and death remain.

" Resting on my Lord in faith
 I pass securely on ;
 Through Him alone I conquer death,
 Through Him my crown is won ! "

" KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH
 UNTO SALVATION."



LXI.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

—MATT. xxviii. 18.

All Power of Jesus. SUCH was among the last whispers of the Heavenly Palm—while still rooted in the midst of the earthly encampments, and when about to be transplanted—the all-glorious ‘Tree of Life’—into the midst of the Paradise of God !

What more precious farewell truth, what more blessed *Keepsake* could the Saviour have confided to His people than this ; that to Him has been committed the Sceptre of universal Empire ! Many, among the multitude He was then addressing on one of the mountains of Galilee, had witnessed His poverty, His humiliation, His cruel buffetings, His bitter death. But now these were all past. His head was about to be “crowned with many crowns.” As King of His Church, “all things had been delivered to Him of His Father” (Matt. xi. 27). He knew that “the Father had given all things into His hands” (John xiii. 3). He would impart the comfort of this ennobling truth to the orphaned Church He was to leave behind Him. When the chariots of God had borne Him away from their sight,

they could still think of Him as boundless in His resources ; that He who so often had spoken to them “in righteousness” was still “mighty to save.” To these very hands that were pierced on *Calvary’s Cross* had been confided the sovereignty of the universe !

John, in his exile, sixty years later, beheld in striking vision a Book or roll “sealed with seven seals.” Tears came to the aged eyes of the Evangelist, because no one in heaven or in earth was found “worthy to take the book” and decipher its mysteries. All at once, one of the redeemed from the earth conveys to him the joyous assurance that he need no longer “weep :” for “the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the book,” and unveil its contents (Rev. v. 7). What was this but the announcement, in significant figure, of the Saviour’s own last utterance, that He had committed to His keeping the roll of *Providence* ; that roll in which is inscribed not only the fate of kingdoms, the destinies of nations—but whatever concerns the humblest and lowliest member of His Church on earth ; with *Him* rests the unfolding of the roll,—the breaking of the seals—the pouring out of the vials—the bursting of the thunders. Need we wonder that, in taking “the Book” into His hands, the ransomed myriads in the Apocalyptic vision should be seen falling down at the feet of the Lamb, with their “harps and golden vials full of odours ;” and exulting in the thought that the *Great Ruler of all* was a Brother of the human race ; that they should attune their lips to the lofty ascription, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof ; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Yes, who will not exult in the thought that this vast world of ours is committed to the rule of JESUS ;—that it

was created "for Him"—that "by Him *all things consist*." I look up to the spangled dome of heaven with its myriad constellations. I am told these lamps, hung in the sky, are burning incense-fires to His glory ; that they march at His word, and their eternal music is an anthem to His praise. I look at the landscape beneath ; that vast furniture in the Palace of Nature is His providing. It is He who covers it in its robe of light, who wreathes the brow of Spring in living green, and decks the valleys in Summer glory. Not a breeze murmurs through the forests, nor a dewdrop sparkles on its leaves,—the sun shoots not one golden arrow through its glades, but by His permission. It is He who pencils the flowers, and intones the thunder, and gives voice to the tempest, and wings to the lightning.

But these manifestations of His power in nature, are subordinate to a nobler sovereignty with which He is invested in the moral and spiritual world. *There*, too, nothing can happen but by His direction, nothing can befall us but what is the dictate and result of His loving wisdom. Often, indeed, as we have frequently said, that wisdom and love are veiled behind gigantic clouds of permitted evil. But, when we remember the pledge, in His own life's-blood, which He has given of His love to His people, dare we impugn the rectitude of His dealings or arraign the wisdom of His ways ? Nay, *this Saviour-God "reigneth, let the earth be glad."* From the heart stripped of its loved gourd by the gentle hand of death, to the more terrible cry of perishing thousands by famine, or pestilence, or "the grievousness of war," what truth more sublime, what syllables fall with more soothing music on the soul than these, "HE" (the Saviour, who *died* for me, who now *lives* for me), "*doeth according to His will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth !*"

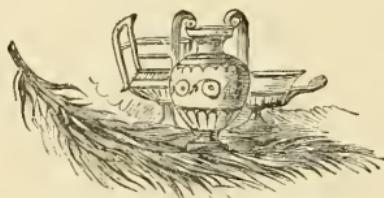
“ Life’s mystery—deep, restless as the ocean,
 Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro ;
 Earth’s generations watch its ceaseless motion
 As in and out its hollow moanings flow.
 Shivering and yearning by that unknown sea,
 Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in Thee !

“ Between perplexities of death and life,
 Thou standest, loving, guiding, not explaining :
 We ask, and Thou art silent ; yet we gaze,
 And our charmed hearts forget their drear complaining.
 No crushing fate, no stony destiny,
 Thou ‘ Lamb that hath been slain ! ’ we rest in Thee.

“ The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,
 The ground-swell that rolls up from other lands,
 From far-off worlds, from dim, eternal shores,
 Whose echo dashes o’er life’s wave-worn strands ;
 This vague, dark tumult of the inner sea
 Grows calm, grows bright, O Saviour-God, in Thee.

“ Thy piercèd hands guide the mysterious wheels,
 Thy thorn-crowned brow now wears the Crown of power,
 And when the dark enigma presseth sore,
 Thy voice hath said, ‘ Keep watch with Me one hour ; ’
 As sinks the moaning river in the sea,
 In silent peace, so sinks my soul in Thee.”

“ THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER. THE SCEP'TRE
 OF THY KINGDOM IS A RIGHT SCEP'TRF.”





LXII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, & the Lord will hear them, & the God of Israel will not forsake them."—ISA. xli. 17.

Help in Extremity. HAS not this been God's way and method of dealing with His people in every age ! bringing them in the hour of desert privation, when the heavens above them were as brass and the earth as iron, to the shade of palm-grove and the refreshment of fountain ?

It was when the disciples were in their hour of extremity, during the storm on Gennesaret, giving themselves up to the hopelessness of despair, that, "in the fourth watch of the night," when darkness was deepest and danger greatest, the great Deliverer appeared on the crested wave—"Jesus went unto them walking on the sea !" It was when the bereft of Bethany had, as they imagined, consigned the fond treasure of their affections to everlasting silence ; and, as they were sitting in the pillaged home, wondering at the mysterious delay on the part of the one Being who could alone have arrested that winged arrow which had laid low the pride of their hearts ; at that crisis-hour, the great Conqueror of death appears, to revive the smouldering ashes of

their faith, and reanimate the joy and prop of their existence! Yes, how often still, does God thus delay His succouring mercy to the very last—"the tongue failing for thirst"—that they may see His hand, and His hand alone, in the gracious intervention or deliverance, and be brought to say, with grateful adoring thankfulness, "Unless the *Lord* had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence!"

Even when He does *not* appear visibly to succour; when some treasured comfort is withdrawn; or when deliverance from some threatened earthly trial or threatened evil is not vouchsafed, it is in order that we may, the more significantly and submissively, cast ourselves on Him. The shelter of the canvas tent is removed. But it only the more endears to us the shadow of the Elim-Palm. Observe the difference between the failing of the world's consolations and refuges and joys and those of the true Christian:—When the worldly man mourns his dried-up brooks or his stripped and dismantled tents, he has lost his all—he has nowhere else to turn; there is nothing left him but the waterless channel—the dreary stretches of blinding sand—the tear of despair—the broken heart—the grave! But, in the case of the believer, when one comfort is withdrawn, his God has other spiritual comforts for him in reversion. Miserable, indeed, are those who have nothing but the poor earthly rill to look to! Sooner or later this must be their history (as multitudes can bear testimony), "And it came to pass, *after a while*, that the brook dried up" (1 Kings xvii. 7,) Or the earthly tent! "suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment" (Jer. iv. 20). But, "happy is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God:"—who can say, in the words of a faithful and venerated member of the Church of Christ

recently entered on his rest and reward,—‘In the crowded city, “Thou art about my path.” In the secret chamber, “Thou art about my bed.” In the trackless desert, “Thou, God, seest me.” In the lonely journey, “Surely the Lord is in this place, though I knew it not.” In the assembled congregation, “In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” In the little company at home, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” In distant cities and foreign lands, “I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries whither they shall come.” In looking back on all the places of residence, “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.” And humbly depending on the promise for the great future, “Where I am, there shall also My servants be.”’

Beautifully have the two greatest religious poets of Germany thus sung (Paul Gerhard and Lange) :—

“Thou wert not born that earth should be
 A portion fondly sought ;
 Look up to heaven, and, smiling, see
 Thy shining, golden lot !
 Honours and joys which thou shalt share,
 Unending and unenvied there !

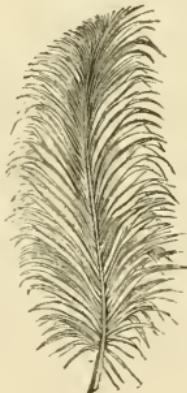
“Then journey on to life and bliss,
 God will protect to heaven ;
 And every good that meets thee is
 A blessing wisely given.
 If losses come—so let it be,
 The God of heaven remains with thee !”

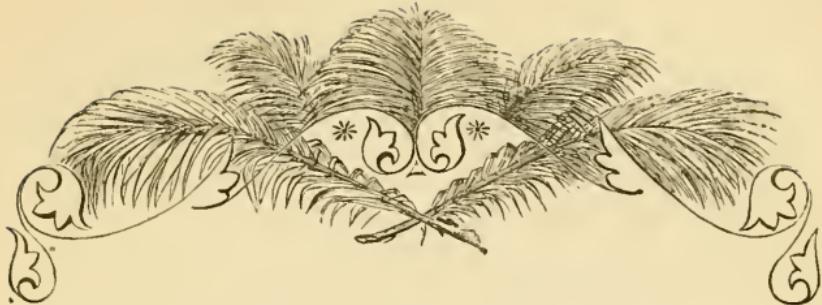
“Yes, the light of comfort shall return,
 Joy’s sweet sun shall shine again at last,
 I shall sing the gladsome song of morning,
 When the watches of the night are past.

“ I shall find again the hopes long vanished,
Like the swallows when the storms are gone,
Fountains shall be opened in the deserts,
Streams by the wayside, while journeying on.

“ Flowers of love and promise shall be springing,
Where the cruel thorn and wormwood sprung ;
And the *homeward path* lie bright in sunshine,
Where my sad harp upon the willows hung ! ”

“ O GOD, THOU ART MY GOD ; EARLY WILL I SEEK THEE : MY
SOUL THIRSTETH FOR THEE, MY FLESH LONGETH
FOR THEE IN A DRY AND THIRSTY LAND,
WHERE NO WATER IS.”





LXIII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"We have a Great High-Priest that is passed into the heavens."
—HEB. iv. 14.

Prevailing Intercession. WE never can recline too often or too devoutly under this Palm-shade of divinest comfort. The great Apostle felt the special delight of reposing under its fronds. He speaks of other favourite trees in the sacred grove under which he loved to repose; but he would seem to reserve this for the last in the enumeration; singling it out with peculiar emphasis amid its compeers—"It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, *who also maketh intercession for us*" (Rom. viii. 34).

Elevating and delightful, truly, is the contemplation of Jesus seated "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens—a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man" (Heb. viii. 2); pleading the merits of His obedience and death on behalf of His Church and people! The Temple-service of old was the shadow of these sublime heavenly things. The Jewish High Priest, having offered on the great day of Atonement the sacrificial oblation on the altar of burnt-offering, attired

himself in a dress of pure white linen,—linen robes, and linen girdle, and linen mitre, white from head to foot. Thus arrayed, he carried the blood in one hand, and the censer of live coals in the other, into the Most Holy place. Beating some fragrant incense small, he mixed it with the burning coals. A grateful cloud arose ;—the whole Temple-court was redolent with the perfume, and enveloped in smoke. Significant type, surely, of Him who has entered, through the rent veil of His own crucified body, into the Holiest of all ; carrying with Him the memorials of His precious blood-shedding and the fragrant incense of His adorable merits ! As the Jewish High Priest sprinkled the blood on the pavement *before* the mercy-seat, as well as *on* the mercy-seat ; so, our Divine Intercessor sprinkled His blood first on the floor of earth where He shed it, and now He sprinkles it on the throne of heaven. There, with the true incense and fire, He pleads. Attired in the white linen vesture of His perfect obedience and righteousness, He confesses His people's sins—He stands between the congregation in the outer court of earth and the Divine shekinah. He waves the fragrant censer ;—and the whole heavenly house is filled with the odour of the incense.

Him “the Father heareth always” (John xi. 42). They are His own remarkable words, “And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (John xvi. 23). How prevailing that ‘Name’ and that plea must be, when we look to the host of petitioners who are warranted to use it ! It is a beautiful part of the vision of the Covenant-angel in Revelation, with “the censer full of much incense” in His hand, that they are “the prayers of ALL saints,” which, perfumed with His

spotless merits, ascend before God's throne and are accepted! (Rev. viii. 3.) It is not merely the pleadings of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, men strong in faith giving glory to God; but the groan, the glance, the tear, the tremulous aspiration of smitten penitents, the veriest lisping of infant tongues; the unlettered petitions morning and evening of the cottage home, where the earthen floor is knelt upon,—where the only altar is the altar of the lowly heart, and the sacrifice that of a broken and contrite spirit. It may be affirmed of the Father, regarding one and all of these pleas of the Divine Intercessor, in the prophetic words of the Psalmist—"Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips" (Ps. xxi. 2). Yes, He has a loving regard for each separate child of His redeemed family; He carries the case of each before God. The one hundred and forty-four thousand harpers on the sea of glass—the representatives of the Church of the glorified—do not exclude His tender concern in those who are still suppliants in the outer courts. He has the name of each separate believer imperishably engraven on His heart. He, the Gracious Shepherd, seated on the Everlasting Hills, and looking down on the earthly pastures, "calleth His own sheep by *name* and leadeth them out." And that personal intercession will never cease, from the hour when the believer is first brought a lowly suppliant to the foot of the cross, until the final petition (unheard by weeping relatives in the death-chamber on earth) ascends from the lips of the Great Intercessor in heaven—"Father, I will, that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

The Jewish High Priest acted as the nation's Intercessor for *one day* only—once every year—and for only a part of that one day. But, day without night is our Intercessor

pleading. He never intermits ; His love never cools ; His ardour never decays ! The true Moses on the Heavenly Rephidim, His hands never grow heavy ; for of Him it is sublimely said, “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” Even on earth, what a joy and comfort it is, in seasons of difficulty, to resort to a tried and loving friend, in whose tenderness and affection we can place unhesitating reliance ! What an ease to unbosom in a brother’s ear the difficulty that is harassing us, and solicit his wise and faithful counsel ! *Jesus* is this blessed resort ;—“the Wonderful Counsellor” (*Isa. ix. 6 marg.*).

“ O gracious Lord, ascended up on high !
 Thou Great High Priest within the Temple veil ;
 To all that call upon Thee ever nigh,
 ‘ Prince who hast power with God, and must prevail.’

“ Let down Thy golden censer from above ;
 And let our waiting souls the blessings share,
 Which Thou hast promised to all those, who love
 To gather round the hallowed gates of prayer ! ”

“ WHAT WILT THOU, AND WHAT IS THY REQUEST ? . IT
 SHALL BE EVEN GIVEN TO THEE.”





LXIV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—Ps. xxxii. 5.

A Pardon^{ing} WHAT an oasis in the bleakest of moral
God. deserts is this! God the Forgiver—Yes, the
Forgiver of great sins!

The psalm from which our motto-verse is taken, and the fifty-first, are the two liturgies of a penitent backslider, the loud and agonising cries of a disinherited son longing for a father's forgiveness. The Father heard them; and made good in his experience, as in the experience of all wanderers, His own promise, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you." If David had been influenced by a consideration of the enormity of his sin, before coming in broken-hearted penitence and conviction to make confession, he might well have seen in it a wall of separation—an unbridged chasm, proclaiming eternal severance from his God. Listen to his plea. Listen to the backslider's suit. It is a strange and remarkable one, "Pardon mine iniquity, FOR IT IS GREAT." Most transgressors would deem the greatness of their iniquity the very reason for the Divine

Being withholding pardon. We might have expected to hear this presumptuous transgressor wailing out, through tears of despair, ‘Lord, if my sin had been less heinous and aggravated, *then I* might have dreamt of forgiveness. If I had been untaught from my youth—untutored and undisciplined in Thy ways, there might have been excuse or palliation for my offences, and room to hope on Thy part for compassion. But I, guilty abuser of privileges, quencher of heavenly light, faithless requiter of abounding mercy, cannot expect, cannot *ask* Thee, to forgive these crimson iniquities. I must be content to be an outcast from Thy presence and love for ever.’ No! He makes the very greatness of his sin his plea for the extension of God’s mercy. With man it would have been different. The turpitude of the crime would have closed the door of human sympathy and human hope. But God’s ways are not our ways, nor God’s thoughts our thoughts. “Let me fall into the hands of God, for great are *His* mercies, but let me not fall into the hands of man.” “After *Thy* loving-kindness, have mercy upon me. According to the multitude of *Thy* tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.” “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” “For *Thy* name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *FOR it is great!*” “From that hour,” in the words of an old writer, “God kept David in the hollow of His hand, the very hand that was once so heavy upon him.”

Reader, are you conscious that your iniquities have thus separated between you and your Heavenly Father. Are you conscious that you are not now as once you were? that you enjoy no longer, as once you did, sensible nearness to the mercy-seat? that you are restraining prayer before God? that the fine edge of conscience is blunted? that, in one word, you have lost ground in the Christian life? Arise,

confess your sin, mourn your backsliding, and cry for pardon. Making a full and unreserved confession, He will not spurn you away. He is waiting to be gracious. In the words of the woman of Tekoah, "Yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." The Father devises means for the reclamation of His erring prodigal. He pities the backslider; just as the general on the field of battle pities the wounded who are carried bleeding by their comrades to the rear. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever."

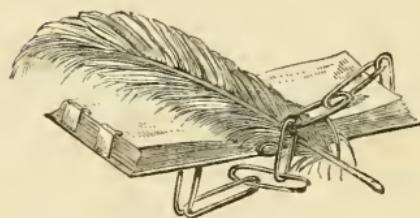
How many lapsed and fallen ones—driven by some sudden hurricane—some sudden assault of temptation well-nigh to despair, have experienced the blessedness of this true repentance! Yes, strange as the expression may seem, the "*blessedness of repentance.*" You have seen, when the rain and the storm had spent their fury on some landscape; when the thunder-cloud had passed, and blue vistas had again opened in the sky, and the sun had shone forth, silvering the dripping branches—how the woodland grove rang with the song of birds;—all the sweeter and more gladsome seemed the notes of music, succeeding the gloom which had so long repressed them. Such is the image of the happiness and joy of the soul in the hour of its restoration; on being brought up from the miry clay, and again set on the Rock of Ages. "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise!"

"Oh, when Angel trump is pealing,
Can the record be effaced?
How evade the dread revealing
Which the pen of Heaven has traced?

“ Go, in penitence bewailing,
Go, and now bemoan thy guilt,
Trust the promise, never failing,
‘ I will save thee, if thou wilt.’

“ Hasten, every soul despairing,
At the cross of Jesus fall ;
Though with legion sins repairing,
He will freely pardon all.”

“ THOU HAST TURNED FOR ME MY MOURNING INTO DANCING :
THOU HAST PUT OFF MY SACKCLOTH, AND GIRDED ME
WITH GLADNESS ; TO THE END THAT MY GLORY
MAY SING PRAISE TO THEE, AND NOT BE SILENT.
O LORD MY GOD, I WILL GIVE THANKS
UNTO THEE FOR EVER.”





LXV.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly."—REV. xxii. 20.

A Gracious Message. No one had so enjoyed the privilege of sitting under the shade of the Divine Heavenly Palm as the writer of this Book of Revelation. No wonder that he should sigh and long for a renewal of the personal presence and fellowship of his ascended Lord: and that the well-known key-note of his latest writing—the farewell inspired legacy to believers of the future, should be, "The Lord is coming!" Again, and again and again (four times in the one chapter from which our motto-verse is taken) do these notes sound in the ears of a waiting, expectant Church. *First*, in verse 7, "Behold, I come quickly." *Second*, in verse 12, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." *Third*, in verse 17, where 'the Coming One' had beautifully announced Himself as "The Bright and Morning Star;" the response—the longing prayer rises in blended harmony from the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Once more, in verse 20, the last audible

voice of the Great Redeemer, until that voice be heard on the Throne—gives, too, the assurance of His speedy *coming*. We close the Divine record with this “blessed hope” like a rainbow of promise spanning the sky of the future, “*He which testifieth these things saith, SURELY I COME QUICKLY.*”

We may appropriately liken these reiterated references in the last Book of the Bible, to the ringing of the chimes with quickening peal, as the worshippers are gathering to take their places in the Heavenly Temple.

The prospect of that promised Advent put music of old into the lips of Patriarchs and Psalmists, Apostles and Prophets. “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad . . . before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth.” “The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” The Apostle Peter, like a watcher on cliff or tower, eager to catch the earliest beam of sunrise, speaks of “looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God.” “Looking for that blessed hope,” says St. Paul, “even the glorious appearing of the Great God our Saviour.” “I am persuaded,” says the same in one of his dying utterances, “that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against *that day*.” By the Great Lord Himself, believers are represented as servants, cheerfully working on, during their Master’s absence; but all alert for the sound of His footsteps, that, “when He cometh and knocketh, they may be ready to open unto Him immediately.”

As we now listen in the message at the head of this meditation to the latest voice of the Great ‘Testifier,’—the last toll of the Advent-bell, let it sound to us like strains of seraphic music floating on a midnight sea. Let it proclaim in our ears blended comfort and warning; tempering prosperity, mitigating adversity, moderating the world’s ambitions, stimulating to holiness, preparing for heaven. Whatever

may be the antecedent or intervening events described in the other parts of the Apocalypse—events in which, whether as regards the Church or individuals, we are, doubtless, deeply interested—let “the Second Coming” tower above them all, like some colossal Alp, with plain and valley and lowlier mountain between, but rising peerless in the blue horizon, its top golden with heavenly sunlight; and from its eternal snows and hidden fountains, sending forth ten thousand streams of hope and joy.

Bright and Morning Star! Harbinger of eternal day! Who will not bid Thee welcome? Who will not help, in the noblest sense, to

“Ring in the Christ that is to be”?

“The Spirit says, COME!” The Divine Agent, whose own “coming” as the Paraclete or Comforter, was declared by the departing Saviour to more than indemnify the Church for her Redeemer’s absence, hails the advent which is to crown and consummate His own work as “the Glorifier of Christ.” “The Bride says, COME,” the ransomed Church on earth, longing for the bridal day of perfected bliss;—the ransomed Church in heaven, saints, martyrs, departed friends, who have fallen asleep in Jesus—take up the antiphonal strain, and cry “COME!” A groaning creation, weary of the bondage of sin and sorrow, and longing for liberty, cries “COME!” Can *we* take up one of the multiplying echoes, and, uniting our prayer with the sons of God, give willing response to the Apostle’s closing invocation: “And let him that heareth say COME?” Can we include ourselves in the words of another ‘Watcher’ for this Day-spring. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we

which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord!" "Wherefore," he adds, Waiting Pilgrims! seat yourselves in calm expectancy under the shade of this choice Elim-Palm :—let the glorious outlook cheer, refresh, and solace you—"Wherefore, comfort one another *with these words!*"

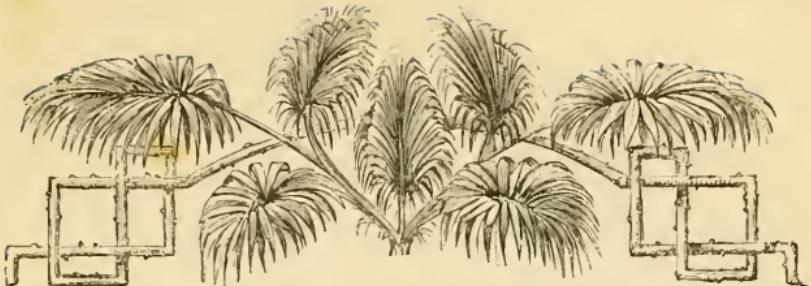
" His voice on earth we did not hear ;
 His steps below we could not trace ;
 But when His glory shall appear,
 We too shall meet Him face to face.

" So surely as the leaves and flowers
 In summer time come back again—
 So surely as in sultry hours
 The dark clouds bring the pleasant rain—

" Shall He, who, in His lowly love,
 Came down that we might be forgiven,
 Break, glorious, through the clouds above,
 And take His children home to heaven."

" MY SOUL WAITETH FOR THE LORD MORE THAN THEY THAT
 WATCH FOR THE MORNING ; I SAY, MORE THAN THEY
 THAT WATCH FOR THE MORNING."





LXVI.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“Be still, and know that I am God.”—Ps. xlvi. 10.

“I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right.”—Ps. cxix. 75.

As we are seated, it may be, in loneliness
Perfect Trust. and sadness, with, perhaps, a dreary sense
of mystery, under one of the wilderness
palms, God thus addresses us in the first of these motto-
verses. Happy for us, if we can respond to the whispering
fronds above us, in the words of the second.

Not such, however, is generally (or, at all events, in the first moments of trial), the utterance of cheerful acquiescence on the part of the smitten, or wounded, or broken spirit. On the contrary, in the midst of dark dispensations, how apt are we to impugn the Almighty’s faithfulness, question the wisdom of His procedure, and set up our wills in opposition to the Divine. Nor are these misgivings confined to the case of personal and domestic afflictions. To take no unfrequent illustration, in which not individual interests, but the welfare of the Church seems involved. Here is an honoured Ambassador of Christ ; a faithful witness of the truth, unwearied in his endeavours to awaken the careless, comfort the mourner, soothe the suffering, and befriend the dying.

Though others might be arrested in the midst of health, and laid on couches of languishing, methought that, for the world's good, and the glory of the Master he serves, a rampart of defence would have been thrown around a life of earnest love, and zeal, and unselfishness. Yet, while other weaklings and "Ready-to-halts" are spared, this standard-bearer, this Asahel, swift of foot and daring in deed—has fallen in the field—just when his courage, and heroism, and example, were most needed, to nerve his comrades and turn the tide of battle. Many decayed and gnarled trunks are left, to occupy their place in the forest, while the strong of stem, and green of leaf, and majestic in shadow, are rooted up. Old crumbling pillars are suffered to remain, while polished shafts, fresh from the quarry, have been struck and shivered with lightning ! Where is He who guides with unerring rectitude the destinies of the universe ? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" "Surely the Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard!"

Or, to take the case which comes most deeply home to the individual heart. Where is the mercy or tenderness in that sudden banishing of life's summer dream—that rude demolition of the most cherished vision of earthly bliss? I was taught to imagine that His dealings to His own were those of a Father, not retributive or judicial, but paternal; that I could see no hand, and hear no lullaby but love. Why has the promised parental solicitude been superseded by the harsh voice and the rebuking rod? Why has the All-loving belied His own saying, "As one whom his mother comforteth"? "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting. . . . Where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained?" (Isa. lxiii. 15, 16).

What is the answer to these and suchlike unworthy surmisings? "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" To the eye of sense, however baffling and mysterious be the ways of the Supreme, it is not for us to judge, and surmise, and conjecture, but to believe; not to question, but, like Job, to kneel and to adore. If we allowed our own short-sighted wisdom to sit in judgment on the Divine procedure, each one of us would at times be tempted to turn away in sullen discontent from many a providential message.

The disciples on their way to Emmaus were cherishing such a spirit. With their back to their Lord's cross, and their faces bent on the ground, they muttered in despair, "We trusted it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." Little did they dream, amid these pensive musings and carnal reasonings, that the Messiah of their nation and of the world was walking by their side!

Martha and Mary were cherishing such a spirit, when they rushed to the uplands of Bethany and gazed with wistful eye across to the Moab mountains, "as to a world beyond the grave," for a tarrying Lord. If their inmost souls had been disclosed—if we could have listened to their *words*, we should have heard them thus pouring out their disconsolate soliloquy—'We thought He would not so have lingered; that His omniscient eye and omnipotent love would have discerned and pitied our tempest-tossed barque in its sea of sorrows. It is unlike His kind heart thus to mock our grief. It is unlike His righteous wisdom thus to single out His and our loved brother for a premature grave. We had felt fondly convinced that darkened and desolate as other homes in Judea might be, the last light He would have extinguished would be that in the Bethany dwelling—the last star expunged from the firmament one so bright with promise!' Nay, hush, unbelieving one: "Said I not

unto thee, that if thou wouldest **BELIEVE**, thou shouldst *see* the glory of God?"

Oh, for an unquestioning faith! We often reason, and conjecture, and 'think,' when, in the circumstances, it is alike our duty and our privilege to listen simply to the voice of Jehovah; not venturing to arraign the faithfulness and love even of dispensations the most inscrutable; but rather, in reverent submission to say, amid crossed wills and frowning providences—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak, He will speak peace to His people and to His saints."

"I think if thou couldst know,
 Oh soul, that will complain
What lies concealed below
 Our burden and our pain.

"I think if thou couldst see
 With thy dim mortal sight,
How meanings dark to thee
 Are shadows hiding light.

"Truth's efforts crossed and vexed,
Life's purpose all perplexed,—
If thou couldst see them right,
I think that they would seem all clear, and wise, and bright."

"Well may Thy happy children cease
 From restless wishes prone to sin,
And, in Thy own exceeding peace,
 Yield to Thy daily discipline.

"We need as much the cross we bear
 As air we breathe—as light we see,
It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
 It binds us to our strength in Thee."

"AND THEY THAT KNOW THY NAME WILL PUT THEIR TRUST
 IN THEE."



LXVII.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

*"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my
heart, and my portion for ever."—Ps. lxxiii. 26.*

God all Satisfying. EVERY theory of human happiness, as we have more than once noted in the preceding pages, is defective and incomplete which falls short of the aspirations of natures born for the infinite. No satellite, with its borrowed light, will compensate for the loss of the sun. You may tempt a man, as he is hurrying on his immortal way, with the world's portions ; you may hold out to him the golden sheaves of riches, you may seek to detain him amid the sunny glades of pleasure, or on the hilltops of fame (and he may be but too willing for a while to linger) ; but satisfy him they cannot ! When his nobler nature acquires its rightful ascendancy, he will spurn them all. Brushing each one in succession away, as the stag does the dewy drops of the morning, he will say, 'All are insufficient, I wish them not. I have been mocked by their failure, I have found that each has a lie in its right hand. It is a poor counterfeit, a shadowy figure of the true. I want the Infinite of Knowledge,

Goodness, Truth, Love !' "In the LORD put I my trust, why say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain ?"

The fact is, it is the very grandeur of the soul which leads it thus to pant after God. Small things satisfy a small capacity, but what is made receptive of the vast and glorious can only be satisfied with great things. The mind of the child is satisfied with the toy or the bauble ; the mind of the untutored savage with bits of painted glass or tinsel ; but the grown man, the sage, the philosopher, desiderate higher possessions, purer knowledge, nobler themes of thought and objects of ambition. Some insects are born for an hour, and are satisfied with it. A summer afternoon is the duration of existence allotted to myriads of tiny *ephemera*. In *their* case, youth and age are crowded into a few passing minutes. The descending sun witnesses their birth and death ; the lifetime of other animals would be to them an immortality. The soul, being unlimited in its capacities, has correspondingly lofty aspirations. Vain would be the attempt to fill up a yawning gulf by throwing into it a few grains of sand. But not more vain or ineffectual than trying to answer the deep yearnings of the human spirit by the seen and the temporal. Men go sighing on ;—drinking their rivers of pleasure, and climbing their mountains of vanity. They feel all the while some undefined, inarticulate, nameless longing after something nobler ; but it is a miserable travestie to say that it has been found, or can be found, in anything here. "Who will show us any good ?" will still be the quest of the groping seeker, till he has learnt to say, "Lord, lift THOU upon me the light of Thy countenance."

You may have seen in our mountain glens, in the grey twilight, birds winging their way to their nests. There may be bowers and gardens of fragrance and beauty close by,

groves inviting to sweetest melody, nature's consecrated haunts of song. But they tempt them not. Their *homes* are in the distant rock, and thither they speed. So with the immortal spirit. The perches of this world will not satisfy it. There is no stable repose in these for its weary wing and wailing cry. It goes singing up and home to God:—it has its nest in the crevices of the Rock of Ages. When detained in the nether valley, often is the warbling note heard, “Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest.” And when the flight has been made from the perishable to the imperishable, from the lower valleys of sense to the hills of faith, from the creature to the Creator, from man to God,—as we see it folding its buoyant pinion and sinking into the eternal clefts, we listen to the song—“*Return unto thy rest, O my soul!*”

O God! All mighty, All wise, All good,—Thou art, in Thyself, all I need, all I require; in sickness and health, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death, in time and through eternity. The snow-clad hills may cease to feed the brooks; that sun may cease to shine, or nature grow weary of his loving beams; that moon may cease on her silver lyre, night by night, to discourse to “the listening earth;” the birds may become mute at the voice of the morning; flowers may droop, instead of ringing their thousand bells at the jubilant step of summer; the gasping pilgrim may rush from palm-grove and stream, and prefer the fiery furnace-glow of the desert sands;—but “this God shall be my God for ever and ever.” And when death is sealing my eyes, and the rush of darkness is coming over my spirit,—even then will I take up the old exile’s strain—the great sigh of weary humanity—and blend its notes with the song of heaven,—“My soul thirsteth for God,

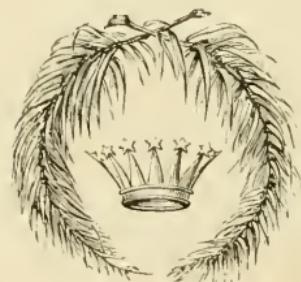
for the Living God : " " I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness ! "

" Thou knowest, Lord, the weariness and sorrow
Of the lone heart that comes to Thee for rest,
Cares of to-day, and burdens for to-morrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confess.

" Thou knowest all the future—gleams of gladness
By stormy clouds too quickly overcast,
Hours of sweet fellowship, and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be crossed at last.

" Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet ;
On everlasting strength my weakness staying,
Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete."

"THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAITH MY SOUL ; THEREFORE
WILL I HOPE IN HIM."





LXVIII.

*“This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing”—*

“He is able also to save them unto the uttermost.”—HEB. vii. 25.

Salvation to the Uttermost. WHAT, to many, would all the other “threescore and ten palm-trees” avail, if they had not this one to rush to for shelter?

The pressing, urgent question with thousand thousand anxious souls—overwhelmed with the weight of aggravated transgression, is this, “Can the God-Man-Redeemer be a Saviour for *us*? A shelter for others, can these Palms afford sure refuge for the guiltiest?” It is the old controversy that Satan has with not a few, whom he first goads on to presumption, and then, when entangled in his meshes, he seeks to drive to despair. Many such has that implacable warder shut up in the deepest dungeons of “Doubting Castle”—gloomy cells, where the sunlight is forbidden to enter—and rung over them the knell of extinguished hope. The crushing thought of personal unworthiness—the memories of guilty bygone years, rise up before them like avenging angels. What! this Saviour and this salvation for *me*,—it cannot be! I have plunged madly into sin;—not, like others, because I have never been warned—never coun-

selled ;—never known the tenderness of a mother's prayers, nor the sanctity of a father's entreaties, nor the privileges of a hallowed home. I have been oblivious of all these. Even now, I seem to listen (though in years long gone by), to voices which I have lived basely to scorn—to counsels I have trampled on ;—the retrospect all the sadder by the reflection that the lips which spake them are hushed in the grave,—and the arms that of old fondled me, as on Sabbath night I knelt by the loved knee, are mouldering in the tomb ! What ! Christ receive *me*, with all that diary of a misspent, godless, defiant life unveiled to His omniscient eye !—deeds of depravity—outbursts of fiery passion—malignant purposes of revenge ; my own bark foundered—and worse it may be than this, miserable wrecks, for which I am guiltily responsible, strewing the shores. Mine is not, as it is with many, a mere upper layer of iniquity ; but it is deposit on deposit —strata piled on strata—the mournful consolidation of a life of sin. Ten thousand echoes ring “lost !” along the dreary corridors of the past. “Surely my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God.” There may be room and welcome for every weary traveller at Elim and its grove, except for me !

Nay, not so. Aggravated as your case is, it is never hopeless ; you cannot hear your spiritual death-knell tolled, so long as you can read the golden letters which head this meditation—“Able to save unto the uttermost.” You may have been to the uttermost a sinner : you may have gone the sickening round of all life's follies—run riot of its whole enchanted circle : O Israel, thou mayest have destroyed thyself : there may be not one redeeming feature in thy case—not one apparent gleaning left for the grape-gatherer : thou mayest be a stript, defenceless, degenerate vine—fit only for the axe and the cumberer's doom. But hearken to

the words of God—"In Me is *thy help*." "I know the thoughts which I think towards you—thoughts of peace and not of evil!"

It is told of Bilney, by the Historian of the Reformation, that on obtaining Erasmus' translation of the Greek Testament, he hurried away with it and shut himself up in his room in Cambridge. On opening its pages, his eye caught the words—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." He laid down the book, and meditated on the astonishing declaration. "What! St. Paul 'the chief of sinners,' and yet St. Paul is sure of being saved!" He read the verse again and again, exclaiming, "Oh assertion of St. Paul, how sweet art thou to my soul!"—(*D'Aubigny.*)

Downcast Pilgrim, in the dreariest of moral deserts! if, with true and sincere penitence of heart, you plead for pardon, "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption" (Ps. cxxx. 7). What a wondrous utterance is that—a lustrous jewel sparkling in a dark setting—found in the 18th verse of the opening chapter of Isaiah's prophecy! One would have supposed, after the awful indictment contained in the preceding verses, that any hope of forgiveness must be closed against the rebellious race—"The people laden with iniquity." But, all at once, the tolling of the funereal bell ceases; and the joyful chime that has borne hope and comfort in many an hour of spiritual desolation falls upon the ear—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Or, take another declaration of similar import: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and

will not remember thy sins." "I—even I"—the very Being thou hast most deeply injured—whose Spirit thou hast grieved ;—I, the Almighty Creditor, am ready to grant and sign a full discharge—"Him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out." The Stronger than the strong man armed sounds the silver trumpet of jubilee, "He hath sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound :" and blessed have been the millions who have heard that joyful sound ! "How useless it is," says an earnest thinker lately lost to the world, and who knew from deepfelt experience the truth of his own words—"How useless it is to tell the desponding, or those distressed by consciousness of guilt, of any remedy but a Saviour's blood. It is here that the true test and proof of the Gospel lies. It is light to the blind, strength to the weary, and consolation for the broken-hearted."

"All in weakness, all in sorrow,
Saviour God ! I Thee implore ;
Lifting up the sad petition
Thou hast often heard before,
In the former days of darkness,
In despairing times of yore.

"For a present help in trouble,
Thou hast never ceased to be ;
Since, at first, a weeping sinner
Fell before Thee trustingly ;
And Thy voice is ever sounding,
Come, ye weary ones, to Me !"

"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR INIQUITIES
WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE."



LXIX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

—I THESS. iv. 14.

Asleep in Jesus. ANOTHER glimpse which Faith, while seated under the Palms of the Valley, takes of "the Land that is very far off," but which at times, too, is brought so very near! We may first state the special occasion of the words at the head of this meditation.

As the great Apostle was now at Corinth, living with Aquila and Priscilla, his beloved son Timothy had brought him from Thessalonica encouraging tidings of the Church he had there founded.

But in that good report there were mingled also tidings of *death*. Some of those to whom he had comparatively recently ministered, had paid the debt of nature and passed from the earthly scene. Their bereaved friends were, moreover, undergoing needless sorrow, because the deceased had been removed before the coming of Christ. The Thessalonians, in common with other of the infant churches, entertained unfounded expectations regarding the imminence of the Second Advent. They imagined it so nigh at hand that they would live to behold it; and when they saw

their loved relations or fellow Christians taken away, they mourned specially at their being deprived of sharing in the joy of welcoming a returning Lord. This Epistle, from which our motto-verse is taken, was written (among other reasons), to comfort and console the sorrow-stricken. It is interesting and remarkable that the first letter of St. Paul is thus a letter *to the bereaved!* It is an “afflicted man’s companion.” The Spirit of the Lord, by inspiration, was upon him. The Lord anointed him “to heal the broken-hearted.”

And what says he to these drooping, saddened spirits? He tells them not to despond, but to rejoice. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

There is no more expressive symbol of higher and diviner verities than the sleep of the body and the subsequent waking in the morning. It is beautiful to see the surging waves of daily life rocking themselves to rest;—to note, say in some vast city, when night has drawn its curtains around, light after light put out in the windows, the street lamps paying solitary homage to the stars as they look down from their silent thrones! What a hush pervades the recent ‘stunning tide of human care and crime!’ Why? Because sleep is locking up ten thousand eyes of those who are dreaming away care and sorrow, fatigue and toil. But anon, as the gates of morning open, and when from the silent monitors of fleeting time the hour summoning to labour strikes, in a moment the ring of countless hammers breaks the trance of night. All is again astir. Sleep has refreshed the workman’s wearied body; sleep has

put new pith and sinew in that brawny arm. The whole world has arisen like a giant refreshed, and sleep has been the elixir that has soothed its wounds and healed its pains.

We need not wonder, then, that this priceless boon to the weary, has been taken by God Himself to describe the quiet rest of His own people in the grave. David, the man after God's own heart, after he had served his day and generation, "*fell on sleep* and was gathered to his fathers." "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*," said Christ. Stephen, when struck down by his murderers, "*fell asleep*." Following the same imagery, "Them also," says the Apostle, "that *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with Him."

But what meaneth Paul by this *sleep*? Is it the sleep of the soul? Is it that the spirit, at the moment of dissolution, falls into a state of torpor or insensibility, in which it remains until startled at last by the trump of God? No! Let us recur to the analogy of earthly sleep. We know that when the body is in a state of profound repose, when the eye is closed in *seeming* unconsciousness on the pillow, it is only *apparently* so. The mind is in a state of constant activity; all its powers are vigorous as ever. Memory is there, bringing up old and treasured scenes. Imagination is there, combining these in strange fantastic medley. Gorgeous visions come and go:—magnificent combinations, in comparison with which waking realities are dull, prosaic, and commonplace. So it is with the soul at death. While the body "*sleeps*" in its grassy bed, the spirit is expatiating in regions of activity and life. It departs "to be with Christ, which is far better."

" There is no death :—the stars go down
To rise upon some fairer shore ;
And bright in heaven's jewelled crown,
They shine for evermore.

“ There is no death :—an angel-form
Walks o'er the earth with silent tread,
And bears our best-loved things away ;
And then we call them dead.”

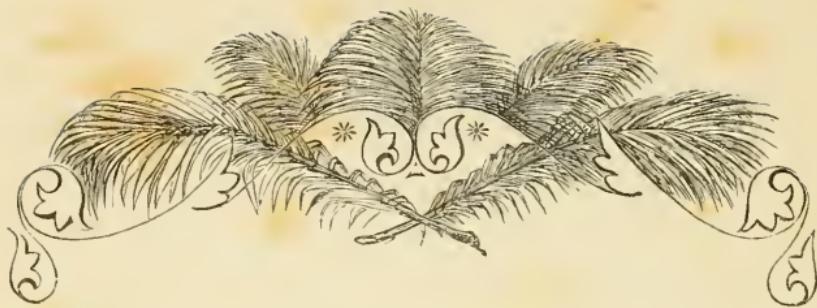
The words of our motto-verse may bear the beautiful rendering (*See Wickliffe, Cranmer, and Rheims Version*), “Them also which are *laid asleep by Jesus!*”—a rendering which, among others, suggests two comforting thoughts,—two most gracious whispers from these Palm-trees of heavenly consolation.

(1.) *That the hour of our death is appointed by Jesus.* We are *laid asleep by Him.* Just as the mother knows the best hour to lay her little one in its couch or cradle; undresses it, composes it to rest, sings its lullaby, and the cherub face, lately all smiles, is now locked in quiet repose. So Christ comes to His people at His own *selected season*, and says, ‘Your hour of rest has arrived. I am to take off the garments of mortality. Come! I will robe you in the vestments of the tomb.’ He smooths the narrow bed, composes the pillow, and sings His own lullaby of love, ‘Fear not, my child, for I am with you, sleep on now and take your rest!’ Be comforted with this blessed truth, that the hour of death cannot come a moment sooner than Jesus appoints. He knows the best time to bid you and yours the long “good-night.” Interesting it is (and a Bible truth too) to think of troops of angels hovering over the death-pillow, and watching with guardian care the sleeping dust. But more comforting still, surely, is it to think of the Lord of angels closing the eyes and hushing to slumber;—Christ Himself leading to the grave—the robing-room of immortality—“unclothing,” that His people may be “clothed upon,” and that “mortality may be swallowed up of life.”

A second suggested thought is, that *the body belongs to Christ*. The soul, indeed, is more specially His. It wings its arrowy flight up to the Spirit World. Angels carry it into Abraham's bosom, and from that hour it is "for ever with the Lord." But what of the material framework? What of the marble tenement? Is it left to crumble in dishonour and corruption? Now that the jewel is gone, is the casket to be disowned? Now that the vestal fire is quenched, is the temple left to moulder in oblivion? Nay, it is the body to which Paul in these words refers. It is the body that is "laid asleep by Jesus." Every particle of that dust of the sepulchre was purchased by His blood. The Apostle elsewhere speaks of "body as well as spirit which are His" (1 Cor. vi. 20). Ye who have nameless treasures in the tomb, come and seat yourselves under the shadow of this Elim-palm. Rejoice in the assurance that these earthly tabernacles are in the custody of Him who has the keys of the grave and of death. The loving hand of Divine parental love was the last to close their eyes; and in the prospect of waking on an eternal morrow, you can go to their graves, and thinking of them as having migrated to the Better Land, away for ever from the harsh jarrings and discords and tumults of the present, can write the epitaph—"So giveth HE His beloved SLEEP."

"It is an uncut jewel,
All earth encrusted now;
But He will make it glorious,
And set it on His brow;
'Tis but a tiny glimmer
Lit from the light above,
But it shall blaze through endless days
A star of perfect love."

"I WILL BOTH LAY ME DOWN IN PEACE AND SLEEP."



LXX.

*"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest,
and this is the refreshing"—*

"Death is swallowed up in Victory."—I COR. xv. 54.

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy
staff they comfort me."—PS. xxiii. 4.*

The last Musing. “REST.” “Refreshment.”—How can such words be employed regarding *Death*? How can shade of Elim-palm be spoken of with reference to that dark Valley, in connection with which the yew and the cypress have always been accepted as the appropriate symbols? In the oldest Epic poem of the world, indeed, the grave is spoken of as the place where “the weary are *at rest*.” But with death itself, there is usually associated no such restful, reposed thought. Though the last enemy—it is still an enemy! Nevertheless, thanks be to God, there *is* here, too, a palm-grove for His true people. These fronds have no louder or more tender ‘whispering of the name of Jesus,’ and His exceeding great and precious promises, than at a dying hour! A traveller in Palestine remarks literally, what we may take allegorically, that “the finest and best palm-trees are along THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN.”

"I am persuaded that . . . death shall not separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Bunyan represents even the timorous pilgrim *Much-Afraid*, as "going through the stream singing." Yes, there is a real companionship in that closing scene. There is a Tree which can make these waters of Marah sweet. The column of cloud and fire, which has gone before in the wilderness, will not forsake in the swelling of the Border river.

And this is no mystical figure—no mere poetical or sentimental illusion. It is a wondrous fact. Thousands who have passed through the final conflict can bear witness to it—the *felt nearness of the Saviour*. No one who has had any experience of deathbeds but can testify, that there is often the sublime consciousness of a PRESENCE there—as if the dying pilgrim rested on a living Arm, and the place became a Peniel, where, like the patriarch, the wrestling soul saw God face to face!

How can we, with lowly confidence and hope, look forward to a similar hour? It is by having Christ as our portion now, if we would have Him as our portion then. What was it that gave David this confidence in the prospect of treading the closing Valley? It was the conscious nearness—the realised presence of Jehovah his Shepherd, in life. He was even then rejoicing in this companionship and love. See how near he felt Him to be! Observe the phraseology of the second of our motto-verses—the form of utterance. It is not "I will fear no evil, for Thou art *to be* with me," nor is it "for GOD is with me," but "*Thou art* with me." He seems to look up with trustful faith to Him who was even then at his side. He speaks not of a remote Being, who would meet him at the valley-entrance—a mere guide

through the gloom of that strange gorge at the end of the journey, but who at other times is unknown and distant. It is the Friend he has known and confided in so long. It is the Shepherd of whom, in the opening strain of the song, he said, that Shepherd is mine—"The Lord is *my* Shepherd." It is He whose guiding hand had led him by "the green pastures," and "the still waters," and "the paths of righteousness."

And was the Psalmist deceived? Did this song of life prove a delusion when the hour of death came? Could he sing it so long as his journey was carpeted with flowers and radiant with sunshine? but did his faith forsake him, and his rod and staff give way, and his song melt into a wail of terror, when the shadows fell around? We have his last words recorded. We have the very hymn which this Hebrew minstrel sang, when the valley-gloom was beginning to darken his path, and the sound of the waters of death fell on his ear: "*He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. This is all my salvation, and all my desire!*" So also was it with him who uttered the triumphant exclamation of the former verse placed at the head of this meditation. He who had so fondly loved and prized the shelter of the Elim-grove in life, could exult, even amid the lowering clouds which shrouded the closing hours of a consecrated existence—"I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him!"

And God is ever faithful who promised, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Thou art with me," says Lady Powerscourt, "is still the rainbow of light thrown across the Valley." Nor will that solemn, mysterious hour be allowed to overtake us till the Lord of life sees meet. This is surely

a comforting reflection (which we had occasion also to dwell upon in the immediately preceding meditation), that life and death are in His hands : that what appears to us to be the most wayward and capricious of occurrences—the departure of a human being from this world—is directly under His sovereign control ; that He gives the lease of existence ; and, when He sees meet, revokes the grant ? Sweetly sings one of the minstrel-band of German hymn-writers :—

“ My God, I know not *when* I die :
 What is the moment or the hour,
 How soon the clay may broken lie,
 How quickly pass away the flower ;

“ My God, I know not *how* I die :
 For death has many ways to come ;
 In dark mysterious agony,
 Or gently as a sleep to some.

“ My God, I know not *where* I die ;
 Where is my grave ; beneath what strand ?
 Yet from its gloom I do rely
 To be delivered by Thy hand !

“ Then comes it right and well to me,
When, where, and how, my death shall be ! ”

Death has no terrors, when it comes thus as a message from death's great Conqueror. He sends His angels—glorious beings who delight to do His pleasure—to the bed-sides of His saints, to bear their spirits on wings of light and love upward to heavenly mansions.

“ For them the silver ladder shall be set,—
 Their Saviour shall receive their latest breath :
 They travel to a fadeless coronet,
 Up through the Gate of death ! ”

“Father, I will” (is His last and closing intercessory prayer in behalf of every member of the Church on earth), “that they also, whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.”

“ There is no death ! What seems so is transition :
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the Life Elysian,
Whose portal we call death.”

It is the portal and portico of “our Father’s house.” As we stand under the porch, the archway over our head projects a shadow. We are for a moment out of life’s sunshine. But the next ! the door opens ; and better than the blaze of earthly sun is ours. The darkness is past, and the true light shineth. In an instant, from the gloomy Valley of Cypresses, we are among THE PALMS OF PARADISE !

“ In the stillness and the starlight,
In sight of the Promised Land,
We thought of the bygone pilgrimage,
And the burning, blinding sand.

“ How gracious, too, had been the dews,
Which from God’s presence fell ;
And the hallowed hours of resting
By Palm-grove and by Well.

“ But now we pitched our final tent,
The desert journey done,
For the glorious hills of the Better Land
Gleamed in the setting sun.

“ A river—the Border river—
Was seen in the dying light,
The rush of its swelling waters
Was heard in the deepening night.

• • • •

“ We sit under Heavenly palm-trees
 In the dawn of Eternal day,
 And look toward the desert hill-tops,
 Where the misty shadows play.

“ The great and terrible land
 Of wilderness and drought,
 Lies in these shadows behind us,
 For the Lord has ‘brought us out.’

“ The great and terrible river
 Which we stood by night to view,
 Is left far off in the darkness,
 For the Lord has ‘brought us through.’ ”

“ BLESSED BE THE LORD, THAT HATH GIVEN REST UNTO HIS
 PEOPLE ISRAEL, ACCORDING TO ALL THAT HE PRO-
 MISED : THERE HATH NOT FAILED ONE
 WORD OF ALL HIS GOOD PROMISE
 WHICH HE PROMISED.”

“ THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST FOR THE PEOPLE
 OF GOD.”



“ Return unto thy
Rest,
O my Soul;
for
the Lord hath dealt bountifully
with thee.”

—PSALM CXVI. 7.

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